

魔女小太郎

有成詩雨

restart (後)

遠藤浅蜊
Endou Asari

Illustration

マルイノ

K.
宝島社

魔法少女育成計画

Restart
（全）

Presented by
Endou Asari

遠藤浅蜊

Illustration

マリイノ



MAGICAL GIRLS



Unknown



あつとまーくにゅんにゅん
@娘々
お札の中にものを
閉じこめられるよ

Exist



シャドウゲール
機械を改造して
パワーアップできるよ

Unknown



ゆめのしまじえのさいこ
夢ノ島ジエノサイ子
魔法のスーツで
どんな攻撃でも
へいきだよ

Retire



アカネ
見えているものなら
なんでも斬れるよ

Exist

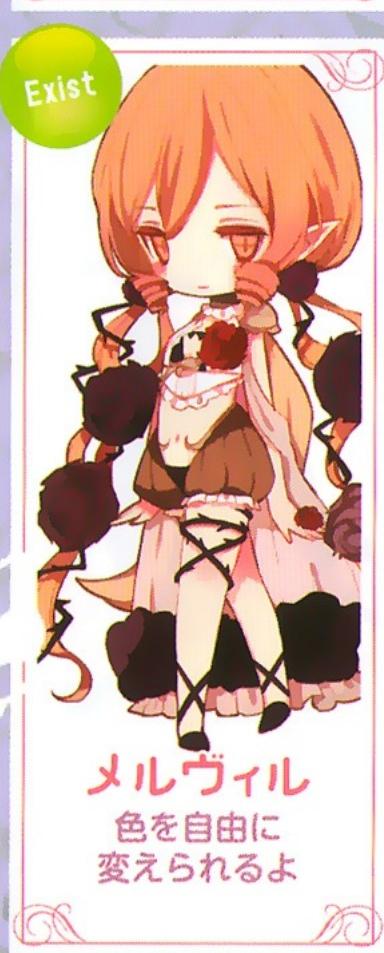


プフレ
猛スピードで走る
魔法の車椅子を使うよ

Retire



マスクド・ワンダー
いろんなものの重さを
変えられるよ



CHAPTER 6

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE

☆ Detick Bell

“Everyone, move, *now!*”

Pfle’s voice echoed loudly, and all the Magical Girls moved as one.

Bell saw Nokko-Chan running over to @NyanNyan and Genopsyo. She tried to slide over to them, carrying a large shield.

Unfortunatey, the large flaming fireball engulfed Genopsyo and @NyanNyan, and Nokko-Chan immediately raised her shield to protect herself.

The impact of the fireball on Nokko-Chan’s shield sent her flying towards a wall.

Detick Bell ran with her wits about her. Holding her own shield, she prayed that the dragon won’t notice her, but at the same time, she’s running towards the dragon.

The dragon’s reaction was fast. It snapped its view to Bell and launched a large fireball at her.

Bell’s reaction wasn’t fast enough. She was running too *towards* the fireball.

Suddenly, sparks of blue appeared in front of Detick Bell, and from it, came Lapis Lazuline, teleporting in front of her, shield at the ready. She pushed Bell away, and prepared to block the fireball.

She blocked the fireball head on, but the impact was still large. It pushed her back as she balanced herself. She finally skidded to a halt and dropped to one knee.

Bell, now on the ground, instantly went back up and ran towards the dragon.

She was supposed to be the distraction. The distraction so that Clantail could attack the Great Dragon with her knife.

She ran again towards the dragon, shield at the ready in front of her. The dragon wasted no second and fired a fireball at Detick Bell.

This time, she was prepared. She raised her shield at the ready, and blocked the fire.

The first thing she felt was a large impact, then sparks of fire burned her. Sparks that flew past the shield, hitting her arms and face. She had to tough it out as it began to dissipate, but it took all her strength to stay standing.

Then, she heard a large thud, a scream, and a crash in the floor.

Sprawled on the ground was Clantail. Her lower body was that of a Grasshopper. Based on what happened, she may have been trying to jump towards the dragon, and was swatted by the tail.

But how? The dragon was clearly distracted by Detick Bell. How did it know where

Clantail was going to strike?

Then, the dragon... smiled? It was... laughing. Wait, did the dragon... understand them?

Pfle spoke her plan right in front of the dragon. The Magical Girls assumed that the dragon was unintelligent, but what if it understood their language.

It knew about the plan before they even launched it.

Even though it doesn't care about anything past the red line, it can still see and hear them.

The dragon was now about to move towards Clantail. Bell couldn't possibly reach her in time.

Nokko-Chan was trying to heal @NyanNyan and Genopsycho. The rest of Clantail's team attempted to run to Clantail.

The dragon breathed fire, hurtling towards Clantail's collapsed body. Then, another blue shard...

Lazuline had teleported near Clantail and shielded Clantail with her shield.

The flames were streaming towards them both. The dragon was relentless. Even though they can resist, The heat and pressure would be too much for Lazuline.

Then, a large harpoon was launched towards the dragon's throat, and another towards its tail. Roaring in anger, the dragon saw the source of the attack.

Melville.

The dragon launched a fireball at her, but Melville was well out of range behind the red line. She was safe. Then, the dragon looked down to where Lazuline was. It saw Lazuline... but no Clantail.

But Bell saw it. Bell saw the ceiling. Hanging on the ceiling, upside down, was Clantail, with the body of a Gecko.

With the dragon confused, Clantail dropped down and slammed the knife towards the dragon's head, piercing its brain.

She didn't just do that, she sliced it vertically until it bled the dragon from head to neck. Then, and only then did she jump away.

It's been two hours since the Great Dragon died. According to the game world, after that time, any monsters of NPCs will disappear.

Sure enough, the Great Dragon's corpse simply vanished. All the blood as well. Only the black soot of the flames remain.

The Magical Girls were resting. The fight took a lot out of them. They'll climb that ladder to the next area soon enough.

In the circular arena, two Magical Girls were lain next to each other. They had been placed on their backs, and Nokko-Chan was crouching next to them, crying.

Detick Bell approached the two bodies. Nokko-Chan looked up to Detick Bell and nodded, and she walked away.

Detick Bell had to perform an autopsy. Genopsyo's suit is fine, it's invincible. However, her visor was somehow lifted, perhaps during that tumble.

@NyanNyan's condition was worse. Most of her body is burnt and charred black. However, she wasn't burnt to soot, probably because of the Water Amulet she wore, which slightly reduced the attack, but not enough.

The official cause of death would be the burning of the dragon, but why did Genopsyo twirl and tumble across the red line?

Why was she here in the first place? Was she following them?

Genopsyo may have thought she could survive a blast with her suit, and technically, she should. That suit withstood lava, according to Nokko-Chan.

This all made no sense. Then Bell remembered Melville's words. There was a traitor among them.

Bell didn't want to believe it, but was Genopsyo the traitor? Was she trying to get @NyanNyan killed and make it look like an accident?

And if that's true, did they finally get rid of the killer amongst them?

Shadow Gale approached Detick Bell, Pfle piggybacking behind her.

"How are they?" asked Pfle.

"Both gone. The fire killed both, I believe."

Pfle nodded gravely.

"I had hoped that when we find Genopsyo, we'd be able to get some answers, however, Genopsyo's sudden appearance raises more questions instead."

Detick Bell agreed with Pfle. This was certainly a highly coincidental and unfortunate appearance. The two were interrupted by Nokko-Chan, who sheepishly walked between Shadow Gale and Bell.

"...Um, I know you two must be discussing something important, but... If it's alright with you. I'd like to bury them. I borrowed a shovel from Pechika's team. Could you help me?"

Pfle, Shadow Gale, and Detick Bell looked at each other, then at Nokko-Chan, whose face was stained red and wet with tears.

The 3 Magical Girls nodded.



☆ Nokko-Chan

Nokko-Chan had been crouched in a corner while Detick Bell, Shadow Gale, and Pfle were looking over the bodies of her friends.

She had been crying.

@NyanNyan and Genopsycho were gone.

Her team was gone.

She was the only one left.

She didn't think this would happen, but it happened like this. Now she has to toughen up and go it alone once more.

Clantail had approached her slowly. She took out her Magical Phone, and transferred something to Nokko-Chan.

Nokko-Chan looked at her own Magical Phone.

A shovel.

"Use that. You should be the one to do it," said Clantail with a somber voice.

Nokko-Chan nodded, and walked to the three Magical Girls.

"...Um, I know you two must be discussing something important, but... If it's alright with you. I'd like to bury them. I borrowed a shovel from Pechika's team. Could you help me?"

Pfle, Shadow Gale, and Detick Bell looked at each other, then at Nokko-Chan, whose face was stained red and wet with tears.

The 3 Magical Girls nodded.

With the help of the other Magical Girls, they travelled all the way to the Wasteland Area.

To the gravesites of their former comrades just outside of the Town.

Nokko-Chan had begun digging. She dug fast, and she dug without emotion. She was suppressing it.

Genopsycho's body was nearly unrecognizable, and @NyanNyan was also in horrible shape. Nokko-Chan didn't want to think about it.

As she dug, she noticed how sturdy this shovel is. Even with the brute strength of a Magical Girl, it was able to withstand and not break.

The blue Magical Girl, Lapis Lazuline, approached her.

"Hey... y'know, I could dig for you," she offered.

"It's fine. It should be me. Please just... let me be"

"But-"

Before Lazuline could finish, Detick Bell grabbed her shoulder and shook her head.

Lapis Lazuline nodded and walked away.

Nokko-Chan had known how to dig graves when Magical Daisy died.

Now, Nokko-Chan was the only one in her team.

It's her responsibility.

She should be the one to do it.

After digging the graves, Nokko-Chan put their bodies inside. She covered it up, and she used some makeshift stones to mark them as gravestones.

They weren't perfect, but they'll do.

Lapis Lazuline approached Nokko-Chan again.

"I'm sorry for what happened. If there's anything you need, lemme know, okay?"

Nokko-Chan simply nodded, and hugged Lazuline whilst crying again.

The blistering heat of the Wasteland Area had been unbearable, but Nokko-Chan hadn't noticed it until now.

She looked back at the row of tombstones.

6 graves. One for each dying Magical Girl.

6 Magical Girls have died, only 10 remain.

☆ Shadow Gale

The walk back to the Underground Area was a long one, but Shadow Gale didn't care.

With Pfle on her back, Shadow Gale continued forward, the other Magical Girls behind her.

After a long trek, they decided to take a rest at the circular arena before heading up the rope ladder to the next area.

Even though Magical Girls don't run out of endurance easily, mentally, they were all worn out.

All of them decided that a nice quiet peace would be a great change.

Shadow Gale picked a nice spot where she sat with Pfle in the corner of the room.

All this death, all this suffering, and for what?

Shadow Gale felt... sad. Sad that she can't do much to help out the other Magical Girls, sad that she couldn't stop the events that were happening.

She was mentally tired. She needed some rest.

She rested her eyes for a bit after laying Pfle down.

After quite some time, she heard Pfle whispering over to her.

"Mamori, you seem to be in a sentimental mood, aren't you?"

Mamori's eyes opened, still lying down.

"So are you supposed to be a mind reader now?"

"Now now, Mamori. We grew up together. I know you as much as you know me. It's okay to feel sad about what's happened, you know?"

"Sure, but talking about it won't change anything."

She could feel Pfle smiling.

“Mamori, you should express yourself more”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you really like carrying me around all the time? It’s not tiring at all for you?”

“We don’t get tired”

“That’s not what I mean”

“You need to be carried”

“Mmm, but you’re saving up candies to hopefully create me a new wheelchair it seems. Right? So, you must not like carrying me around”

“That’s not why I’m getting you a new wheelchair, I’m doing it so you can be back in your wheelchair, my lady.”

“I bet I must have been like an old man, one who can’t do anything much by herself, right? It’s silly to see me being carried around like that, don’t you think?” Pfle said, a smile still on her face.

“My lady, no. The fact is, it’s not dangerous for me, and it’s safe for you, and it puts no strain on me. I’m doing my job”

“...But do you like it?”

“Why does it even matter?”

“Because what you feel does matter, Mamori”

Shadow Gale fell silent.

After a few seconds of silence, she replied.

“We should continue on. We’ve gotten enough rest. Whenever you’re ready, my lady.”

Shadow Gale carried Pfle once again, and she began climbing the rope ladder.

Pfle’s weight hadn’t bothered her, but the actual travel up the ladder and ahead have been bothersome.

After the ladder, there was a small tunnel that required her to crawl around.

After that, there was a cliff that she had to climb. Looks like she hasn’t quite reached the next area yet.

But she powered through these, and her Magical Girl endurance made sure that she could.

Finally, she reached an area where there were some trees. The ceilings became significantly higher, and the temperature seemed cooler.

In front of Shadow Gale was what seemed to be a beautiful lake underground.

Shadow Gale was impressed. This was quite a beautiful lake hiding in the midst of this underground area.

In front of her was the gate to the next area. A large wooden door. Luckily, no monsters appeared in this area.

Shadow Gale pushed open the doors and witnessed a large hallway.

The smell of moist and damp water was gone, replaced with a beautiful aroma of carpets, wooden tables, and shelves.

This area was...

...The Library Area.

That was unexpected.

Wasteland, Grassland, Mountain, City, Underground... Library?

The area itself was stocked to the brim with books as far as the eye can see. Shelves reaching up to the ceiling. Tables and chairs positioned everywhere.

“This is wonderful!” yelled Pfle from behind her back.

Shadow Gale found a nice comfy looking chair and sat Pfle down on it. Finally, Pfle could have some comfort.

Shadow Gale grabbed some books from the shelves, and offered it to Pfle.

Strangely, most of them seemed to be blank, which disappointed Pfle.

Nonetheless, Pfle hadn’t forgotten their actual purpose of being here. She took out her Magical Phone, and consulted the Item Picture Book.

“Let’s see what kinds of items we can buy here.”

The first item that they saw on the shop list was a *Magic Carpet*.

It’s a carpet that can transport up to the weight of one adult male. The speed that it can reach is about the average speed of an adult male as well.

Magical Girls can run much faster than that.

But Pfle might want it, since she had no wheelchair anymore.

The width of the carpet changed depending on the area, which made Shadow Gale wonder on how big the Library Area just might be.

The next item on the list is the *Holy Amulet*.

Just like how the Water Amulet in the Underground Area reduced the damage of Fire-based attacks, Holy Amulets reduce the damage of Demonic-based attacks.

Pfle had read that the Library Area’s monsters consist of demons and spirits, which makes the Holy Amulet particularly useful in this case.

Finally, as usual, a weapons and armor section. *Weapon +7*. With the Magical Candies received by the killing of the Great Dragon, they should be able to buy it.

Then, *Shield +7*, plus the drop they had from the Great Dragon. Well, truthfully, it was Clantail that got the drop. However, she has stated that she didn’t feel like using a shield, so she gave it to Pfle, who came up with the coordinated plan.

The *Great Shield*. Its stats are comparable to a *Shield +12*, hopefully enough to stop any other monster’s attacks.

Pfle moved on and looked at the next on the list.

[R].

It still costs 100 candies. With the amount they received from defeating the Great Dragon, they could try a lot.

So they did. They purchased as many [R] items as they could. It cost them most of their candies, but they wanted to wait until they had received a rare item.

3 Maps.

A toothbrush.

A toothpaste.

Some climbing rope.

“Hahaha, our luck hasn’t changed, has it?” chuckled Pfle.

The rope was over 50 meters, but was just a normal climbing rope.

One more purchase.

“Oh... Now *this* is interesting.”

They had gotten a rare item.

Starting Area Changer.

Pfle consulted the Item Picture Book. This item allowed players in the party to change their starting area, but only to areas they’ve been to.

This will be useful in the long run.

Pfle decided to call that attempt finished.

Then she moved on to check *Event Items* on the Item Picture Book.

That’s when her face froze.

“Mamori”

“Yes, my lady?”

“...It seems that neither @NyanNyan nor Genopsycho were the traitors.”

“What do you mean?”

Pfle showed her the counter for the Magical Coin.

(1/1).

“She’s still out there. Masked Wonder’s killer is still out there.”

Shadow Gale sighed, “At this point, I’m not even surprised. We’ll keep a lookout.”

Pfle nodded, and put her elbows on the table, supporting her head. Her face and a distant look and a smile on it.

Shadow Gale has seen this look before.

On the outside, Pfle looked content, but this was actually the look she made when she believed she was a failure.

When they were in middle school, and Pfle's face was hit with a dodgeball so hard that it bled, she made that face at home.

When she flunked on a subject she normally was good at, she would make that face.

Now, with the killer still out there, losing the duel, losing her wheelchair, and over 6 Magical Girls dead, she must have felt like more of a failure than before.

Shadow Gale tried to think.

Why did Genopsycho commit suicide, and why did she take @NyanNyan with her.

Even if she didn't know about the red line, she shouldn't have stumbled through to the dragon's arena.

The traitor would still be someone who was alive, right?

While she hated the thought, Shadow Gale also would have to consider Pfle as a possibility as well.

She was the one with the information on the traitor, the one that always was one step ahead, and the one with the most logical explanation.

Could that be a cover-up?

Suddenly, Pfle spoke up.

"I think I have a solution"

"What is it?"

"I suggest dissolving our party"

Shadow Gale lost all the force in her body at that sentence. Her eyes widened as she tried to understand Pfle's intentions, but she can't read Pfle's face at all.

Pfle just smiled.

☆ Pechika

The next area was a Library Area. Gone are the disgusting smells of the Underground area, replaced with the wonderful aroma of books and a nice soothing atmosphere.

Perhaps because Pechika's been in so many libraries before in real life, but she wasn't really expecting mosters to show up.

Libraries are meant for one thing, *knowledge*. So fighting didn't seem to be a thing that could happen here, unlike in the previous areas.

But Pechika is not stupid. This was another area, so she still expected something in the back of her head.

Clantail had once again changed her lower body.

Back in the first few areas, she prefers either a deer or a horse. Then, she became a spider

in the Underground area.

Because the Library area was slightly cramped for a large animal, she had the lower form of a monkey.

It's the most human-like body while still not being human.

They purchased the items from the Library shop. *Holy Amulet*. Presumably doing the same thing that the *Water Amulet* did in the Underground Area.

While exploring the Library Area, the team saw what appeared to be a black fog forming.

The black fog changed its shape, morphing into what seemed to be some kind of lion.

Growling, the lion went and kicked Miyokata nearly halfway across the room. Pechika immediately prepared using her *Shield +7*.

Clantail and Leonetta wasted no time. They pounced on the lion, and Leonetta stabbed and sliced her way through it.

Thanks to their *Holy Amulet*, they were able to physically damage this demonic lion.

Finally, they ripped it apart, and it died.

These were the enemies of the Library Area.

Demons, Devils. Shape-shifting demonic creatures. Often prefers to shapeshift to animals.

However, Magical Girls are powerful beings. Animals can't hurt them.

Also, there seems to be a unique rule that's only in the Library Area.

Within the entire area are some chairs and desks. It seems that if Magical Girls sit on these chairs, the monsters won't attack them.

So of course, before exploring a new section, they check to see if there are some chairs around first.

Then, Pechika could safely sit in these chairs while the other 3 deal with any enemies.

It was a better plan than having Pechika wait in the sidelines.

Now, however, it was time to eat.

Pechika had saved up some stones from the Underground Area.

She placed her hands on it and it turned into a delicious meal.

Today's menu, hashed beef.

The 3 Magical Girls all sat down in silence eating.

"You know, I'm wondering. The demons are to be able to *shapeshift* yes? Do you think they can turn into one of us?" asked Miyokata.

Pechika didn't know how to answer that.

She looked over at Clantail, who shrugged while eating.

Leonetta was also no help. She was just munching on her food, enjoying the taste.

Miyokata continued talking, "Well, it was just a thought."

While they were eating, their Magical Phones rang again.

"We're being transported back. Another event. Wasteland Town. Get ready," said Clantail.

And then their environment changed.

Pechika's mood was strangely very happy.

Perhaps it's because her team's morale was still high, despite what happened.

Genopsycho and @NyanNyan had died.

There was a traitor among the Magical Girls.

Genopsycho and @NyanNyan's deaths were very strange. They hugged each other, and one of them tumbled the other.

Was Genopsycho the traitor? Was @NyanNyan the traitor?

The logic for that is that one of them must have expected suicide.

If *none* of them was the traitor, was it all just an accident? Things like that happen, but...

Pechika wasn't sure.

Fal appeared in the middle of the town square.

"Well, regarding last time's tragic events, we'll go with an easier one today, Pon. Today's event is a rock-paper-scissors tournament! The winner will receive 1000 Magical Candies, Pon! Good luck!"

That's it? Nothing more?

Pechika was glad.

1000 candies were pretty hard to obtain, but you can do it if you defeated over 10 of those demons in the Library Area.

The tournament began, and Pfle won in the end.

The log-out period was starting, and Pechika took a moment to look at her surroundings.

Nothing much has changed. Melville is alone, acting independently.

In the corner, Detick Bell, Lapis Lazuline, and Pfle (who is apparently riding on a magic carpet???) are talking with Nokko-Chan.

Pechika couldn't hear much of their conversation, but she saw Nokko-Chan sheepishly nodding.

Pechika also saw Shadow Gale alone.

Curious, Pechika looked at the team list in her Magical Phone.

It seems that Detick Bell, Lazuline, Pfle, and Nokko-Chan have merged into one team.

Was Shadow Gale being abandoned?

It seems that there was some rearrangement that Pechika didn't know about.

At times like this, Pechika looked back to her teammates. Team Clantail had survived intact through many areas, and it looks like they would stay that way.

Pfle then made an announcement.

“I’d like to say that Shadow Gale and I have found what seems to be a hint in the Library Area. I figure it’s best that we share it here before we logged out.”

All the Magical Girls perked up and listened in.

“The hint states that the Demon Lord’s castle would be the next area. If that’s so, that means we’ve reached the endgame. The goal of this game is to kill the Demon Lord, so we should all strive to do that the next time we log in.”

All the Magical Girls nodded.

The last area.

Pechika had almost forgotten that the goal of the game was to kill this Demon Lord, whatever that was.

Whatever comes next, Pechika will be prepared.

☆ Nokko-Chan

Noriko had been brought back into reality. Every time this happens, she always has to check to see if her surroundings were the same.

Once she does, she can ease back into her daily life again.

She wants to visit her mother. Hospitalized, her mother can’t really do much, so Noriko always comes to visit whenever she can.

She’d prefer to visit as a Magical Girl too, so she can use her powers.

Normally, that would be hard to do, but for Noriko, it’s a special case.

Nokko-Chan looks exactly like Noriko’s usual looks. As Nokko-Chan, Noriko is also 10 years old. She simply needs to dye her hair black as Nokko-Chan and no one can tell the difference.

This was also a form of training.

Because she was constantly using her powers, Nokko-Chan’s powers grew. Her range increased, the ability to manipulate others’ emotions increased.

It’s like working out, only for your powers instead of your body.

The hospital was very large. There were many shops in the lobby. Pastry shops, grocery stores, food shops.

Noriko bought some apples and a nice lunch, and proceeded to head upstairs to the hospital.

Nurses, doctors, and patients greeted her with a smile whenever she passed by.

Noriko always manipulated a happy aura to everyone as she walked by. It’s best to do that

in a hospital. Gives people hope.

Then, she went to the room she wanted.

She opened the door, and saw a woman in a bed.

“Come in,” said the woman.

Noriko came in sheepishly, and offered the woman her lunch.

“Hey mom. I brought you food,” she said.

Noriko’s mother smiled and accepted.

Her eyes were weak, and her cheeks a bit puffy, but she was her mom, and Noriko would make sure she would get better.

She had been hospitalized for a long time now, and Noriko tried to make ends meet to make sure it pays for the hospital bills.

“Noriko, honey?” said the mom.

“Yes?”

“If something’s bothering you, you can tell me, okay?”

Noriko nodded.

“I will, don’t worry.”

She lied.

She won’t.

She won’t make her mother worry. She’ll make her happy.

Be happy.

Be at ease.

Be calm.

Noriko used her powers to give her mother a sense of bliss. Her mother shouldn’t have to know about what’s going on. She should focus on healing.

That is what’s important.

Noriko spent most of the day with her mother before she had to go back home.

Because Noriko’s powers affected the human mind, Noriko had to pay attention to those details.

She understood how the mind works better than anyone.

But there is one thing she couldn’t understand.

Why did Genopsycho and @NyanNyan commit suicide? And if it’s not suicide, why take the other with them?

Genopsycho’s character doesn’t match well with any of these options. From the first time Noriko met Genopsycho, she already understood her personality.

Arrogant, stubborn, but kind and caring. Murder-suicide isn't in her portfolio.

Then there was @NyanNyan. It looked like she was hiding something. She obviously knows something from her past, but couldn't remember.

Could that have motivated her to kill and/or commit suicide, though?

None of their previous personality traits could lead them to these actions.

But there was always a wildcard. Noriko remembered her past family life.

Her mom and dad were always very caring, and then her mother became sick.

Her father decided he couldn't care for both, so he left the family.

A man she thought loved them left them for himself.

Personalities can change.

So did Genopsycho and/or @NyanNyan have a change in personality?

Or were they manipulated?

One thing's for sure, Noriko's original team is gone.

But Detick Bell and Lazuline had invited her to their team.

Pfle had also decided to join. When asked about Shadow Gale, Pfle simply stated,

"We're going our separate ways for now, we have slightly differing opinions on these".

Pfle was someone that was very intelligent. She was always one step ahead, and always willing to show initiative.

Strange behavior for her to switch teams like this. Might be good to keep an eye out.

In 3 days, Noriko will be brought back to the game world. Until then, she will work and get money.

In real life, money was a big issue. After killing the Great Dragon, she had earned a reward and a large sum of money.

Money to pay for living and for her mother.

She was determined to clear the game, to get the money needed for treatment, and to get the money needed to live her daily life as well.

MASTER'S SIDE

PART 6

“I think that I *need* to play the villain role, don’t you think? Magical Girls are supposed to be the heroes of the story, so they need a common enemy to fight. That role belongs to me! Haha!”

The girl with glasses laughed as she sat while hugging her knees, wiggling her chair on the long table separating her and the White Magical Girl.

The wobbling chair knocked over the glasses girl’s coffee, and it spilled across the table.

“What do you think, Snow White?” asked the glasses girl.

The White Magical Girl, wearing a sailor schoolgirl uniform, was sitting on the opposite side of the table.

Her eyes were cold, in contrast to her cutesy appearance.

“The Land of Magic wants these Magical Girls free. Do it. Now.”

“Set them free? Of course! They just have to clear the game!”

“I don’t think you understand me. Let them go, *now*.”

“Now!? But they’re so close to winning! Hmm... alright, but I have a condition.”

“A condition?”

“Yes. I’ll let them go now, if you tell the Land of Magic to reform the Magical Girl selection process.”

“What?”

“The process they’re doing now doesn’t produce ideal Magical Girls. Some of those girls are unsuited for protecting the world. How on earth are you going to be able to fight off a large threat if you don’t know if you can fight off each other? Reform the tests to be like yours, and I’ll release the girls.”

“That’s not negotiable.”

“You don’t see the benefits? Look at *you*, Snow White! Look at *yourself*! You’re out here because you passed your test! If you didn’t, you wouldn’t be here! You can’t be the crime fighting Magical Girl you are now if you didn’t have to fight for your life back *then*!”

“No Magical Girls will be killed by you anymore.”

“*Me!*? I *never* killed anyone! Magical Daisy? She died in an accident! The rest of them killed *each other*. My rules were to *cooperate* to kill the Demon Lord, not kill each other to win. Don’t you see, Snow White? These Magical Girls are not ideal. They’re flawed, so they kill each other whenever they see a chance!”



Snow White stood up,
“We’re done here. You’ll release them right now.”
The Magical Phone on the table powered on.
From it, popped out Fal.

“Snow White! You don’t have much time, Pon! 6 girls have already die-”

Snow White slammed her fist on the phone, and Fal’s projection disappeared.

“You killed six!?”

“I told you, I didn’t kill anyone!” said the girl with glasses, smiling.

Snow White brandished her halberd, but something was wrong... She can’t.

The girl with glasses smiled.

“You want to threaten me in *my* world? We’re not in reality, Snow White.”

Snow White focused her mind, but the glasses girl smiled.

“You’re trying to read my mind with your little power? Finding any distress? How cute. I told you, this is *my* world. *My* rules. I can turn off your powers if I want to.”

Snow White’s eyes widened. What was this?

“I never told you my Magical Skill, Snow White. I control cyberspace. I control everything. I am a god here. I can bring you to my little cyberspace network, and you are at my mercy.”

Snow White’s face was still stoic.

“Do you remember Nemurin? Poor, sweet, Nemurin. She’s like me, only her ability works in dreams. She could bring people to dreams, and be a god in there as well. Just like my powers, if Nemurin wanted to, if you died in her dreams, you die in real life too! I bet you never knew about that, did you?” said the girl with glasses, smiling.

The mention of Nemurin made Snow White flinch with anger.

The girl continued,

“You know, I could kill you right now, and you wouldn’t be able to do anything about it,” she said, grinning.

Snow White’s expression didn’t change. She wasn’t afraid of this girl, and she knows this girl doesn’t fear her as well.

“But I don’t want to kill you, Snow White. I don’t even want to kill my players. I don’t want to kill anyone. Why should I? I’m here as an ally, not an enemy. I want to be friends, believe it or not.”

The girl poured another cup of coffee into her mug.

“Tell me something, why do you think these girls are killing each other in the game, hm?”

No answer from Snow White.

“It’s because they weren’t raised properly as Magical Girls. That’s why I named this game the *Magical Girl Raising Project*. I got that name from your selection test, by the way, thank you for that,” she said as she sipped a cup of coffee.

She put the cup down, and grinned again.

“My goal is to find the ideal Magical Girl, Snow White. One who will become a champion

of justice and a great hero. Just like you.”

Snow White sat down on the chair.

“Your days are numbered. You know that, right? You have the upper hand now, but not for long,” said Snow White.

“I don’t doubt you. After all, the Land of Magic sent their best Magical Girl, *Snow White!* Do you know why you’re the best, Snow White?”

The girl adjusted her glasses.

“...It’s because you survived. You’re a survivor. You lost close friends, you lost so many, you saw so much death. You vowed never to let that happen again. Now look at you. Wouldn’t the world be a better place with more Magical Girls like you?”

Snow White closed her eyes, fury built up inside of her.

“Do you want to leave? You can’t kill me even if you wanted to. The door to reality is behind you. You should come back once you have a plan. I look forward to seeing you again, Snow White.”

No choice. Snow White can’t win like this. Not now. She had to find a way past this girl.

Snow White stood up, and without saying a word, left the room.

The girl with glasses smiled. She began talking to herself.

“These *children* will be raised properly, Snow White. They’ll become ideal Magical Girls. That’s my purpose, and that’s what I’ll do...”

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WHAT IS THE MAGICAL GIRL RAISING PROJECT? (DEMON LORD EDITION)

- ★ Intuitive for beginners, satisfying for advanced players!
- ★ Magical Trace System allows you to feel like you're in real life when playing!
- ★ High quality graphics! It's on the level of real life!
- ★ Millions of customizable items! Let your creativity shine!
- ★ Best of all, it's Free to Play for *life*!

Welcome to the Magical Girl Raising Project!

Unlike other players, you have a special role, YOU are the Demon Lord!

You're a Magical Girl like any other! However, you hide amongst the other Magical Girls as they try to find you.

Your goal? To kill the other 15 participants.

The reward? 1 Million Yen!

Of course, you'll be rewarded for Clearing Areas and other events too! Keep your wits about you!

You can escape the game if all 15 participants have died. Then, you win the game!

Good luck and have fun!

CHAPTER 7

LAZULINE'S DREAM

☆ Pechika

Pechika has 1 Million Yen. This was received when the girls defeated the Great Dragon. But here's the more important thing. How is she going to explain that she got 1 Million Yen to her family?

Her father, grandfather, and little brother wouldn't understand.

'Oh, I just won the lottery'. Impossible.

'I was in a cooking contest'. Why didn't you tell us?

'My friends donated money to me over the years'. And you got to a million?

This was going to be harder than she thought.

She was going to clear the game. She was going to clear this game. The endgame is near.

The next area is the Demon's Castle. She was going to clear this game.

...Pechika wondered if she was actually able to escape, or quit.

She turned on her Magical Phone.

“Fal”

“Yes, Pon?”

“What happens if you decide to quit?”

“Huh? Oh... well, you'll get a heart attack, Pon. You'll die. I really don't think that's a good idea.”

“So we have to see this through.”

“Unfortunately, Pon. You're doing great, so far. I'm sure you'll do fine, Pon!”

“Thanks Fal”

Pechika closed her Magical Phone.

So she had no choice. No escape routes. This was it.

She stayed at the park longer this time.

She wanted to talk with Ninomiya-Kun longer.

She wanted to stay, but time seems to fly by so fast.

Ninomiya-Kun came by. They sat at the park bench. They began their talks with funny stories, and of what happened a few days ago.

It looked like Ninomiya-Kun was having a bad game last night.

He kept missing his swings, and he couldn't hit any of the baseballs. He kept striking out, and his coach yelled at him, called him useless.

But Ninomiya-Kun said that it didn't matter, since he says that he'll always improve.

Always improve, huh?

Pechika had been getting better at defending herself. She still couldn't fight, but she can use her shield pretty well.

Her equipment's upgraded since before, and maybe she'll stand a chance now.

Her team's backed her up since, and they'll continue to do so.

Yeah, maybe she *will* improve. That was a nice thought.

Pechika continued her talk with Ninomiya-Kun far into the night. He had to get home first, and they separated.

Pechika sat at the bench, staring into the night sky, as the stars shone brightly.

☆ Detick Bell

The grass was flowing in the wind. Not a sound to be made, no one around.

Bell continued to walk ahead.

Flower seeds were flowing near her, the wind howling around her.

It was a peaceful night. A good time for thinking. A good time for investigating.

Cherna Mouse is dead.

Melville is missing.

Nokko-Chan had been invited to their team.

Pfle had some quarrel with Shadow Gale.

Bell's party has gone back to 4 people once more.

Although they've restored their numbers, they haven't restored their combat abilities.

Cherna Mouse had been the center of Team Bell's combat. Melville also provided support in combat.

In contrast, Nokko-Chan was not the fighting type, Pfle had no wheelchair, and Detick Bell could barely fight either.

Which means most of the fighting is left to Lapis Lazuline.

Lazuline's strength was overshadowed by Cherna Mouse. She had unbelievable bravery, shown when fighting the Great Dragon.

Lazuline was also a great fighter by herself, it's just that she never got to show her skills because Cherna would always be there, so she never needed to fight.

In fact, during the battle with the Great Dragon, Lazuline nearly sacrificed herself to

protect Clantail.

Shielding Clantail had burned a lot of Lazuline, but she didn't mind, she saw herself as a hero.

But she was still one person doing the fighting.

Because of these reasons, Team Bell has become more of a scouting team.

Riding a magic carpet, Pfle would issue instructions to the team while the rest perform at their best.

That was in the game.

In real life, Bell still had something she wanted to do.

Even though she believed with all her heart that Lazuline is innocent, her mind desires proof.

Detick Bell is a detective.

Her job is to investigate and find the facts, and that's what she'll do.

Tokyo suburbs.

The heart of the city.

There were many people walking around to and fro, a variety of age groups and social classes.

Men and women with different jobs and lives, oblivious to each other's situation.

Different from the peaceful aura of the countryside or a small town.

Unlike Magical Daisy, Lapis Lazuline knows what Detick Bell looked like as a Magical Girl, so Detick Bell had been searching under the guise of Shinobu instead.

There was a department and cosmetics store nearby, which Shinobu further used to hide her appearance.

Even though Detick Bell had powers, Shinobu's intelligence as her human form was the same as her Magical Girl form.

Magical Daisy took 3 days to find because of her popularity.

Lazuline would take a bit longer. Shinobu just hoped she could do it in time.

Wherever there was no one around, Shinobu would transform into Detick Bell and use her powers to interrogate the buildings of Tokyo.

It was harder to find Lazuline's whereabouts, but after searching around, several buildings have often seen a figure matching Lazuline's description jumping off buildings and whatnot.

It was then easy enough to trace back to popular locations where Lazuline would be hiding in as a human.

Her search led her to the Entertainment District.

A strange place, but anything's possible, right?

Shinobu followed the traces until she reached a cabaret club.

She asked the owners of the club what seemed to probably be vague questions.

“I’m looking for a young woman.”

It’s not like she knows what Lazuline looks like as a human, and Shinobu’s not very good at drawing facial features, so her search had been hindered a bit.

She looked at her pocket watch, it’s been two and a half days since log-out period.

She wanted to find out Lazuline’s identity *now*.

“Huh?”

A voice was heard from behind Shinobu.

She looked behind her and saw a familiar looking girl.

Blue dress that shone even in darkness.

A dress lined with jewels.

A white fluffy cloak.

A black and white striped tail.

Glossy black hair.

“*Bellsie!*? Is that you!? What are you doing in a place like this?”

A wide smile appeared on the blue girl’s face. There’s no doubt about it, this was Lazuline.

But how did she recognize Shinobu? First of all, she wasn’t even in Magical Girl form, secondly, she swore she had disguised herself, so how...

“Oh my gosh! You came all the way to Tokyo to see me!? Aww, *Bellsie*!!!”

Shinobu grinned embarrassingly.

She didn’t know what to do.

She just nodded slowly.

“For real!? But how did you know where I lived? Ahh... riiight, you’re a *detective*! That’s how you found Magical Daisy, right? Now you found out where I lived! Aww, *Bellsie*, you’re so *cool*!”

So much for Shinobu’s disguises.

“Well then, since you came into all this trouble getting here, do you wanna come over to my house?”

Shinobu was startled.

This was her goal, but she didn’t expect Lazuline to comply so willingly, let alone offer her to come to her house.

Shinobu nodded again.

Lazuline clapped happily.

“Lazuline mooode, off!!! Transform!”

You don’t really need to shout to transform back into a human, but Lazuline would be the type of person to do it.

As a human, Lapis Lazuline looked very different from her Magical Girl form.

A high school girl, about 16 or 17 years old, wearing a blazer from her school, her eyeshadow was blue, and her hair, braided, was colored a reddish maroon.

She looked like a flashy high school girl.

Shinobu remembered girls like these when she was in High School.

It was so out of place for Lazuline to be so bright and cheerful under all of these circumstances.

Shinobu wanted to believe that she wasn’t the traitor. Was she hiding ulterior motives?

“Bellsie!!! You’re lagging behind! C’mon! I’ll walk you over to my house!”

A spunky high school girl. She was already running away.

Shinobu tried to keep up with this girl, but she, in her 20s, could not keep up with this 16-year-old. Especially not in her human form.

Out of breath, Shinobu finally caught up when Lazuline stopped to pet a cat.

“Hey there kitty, kitty! How are you today?” she said, grinning.

The cat purred as Lazuline petted it.

Lazuline looked back at Shinobu,

“C’mon, my apartment’s back here!”

She lived on the 5th floor. It was a nice apartment, but it wasn’t luxurious. A modest place.

Lazuline invited Shinobu to her room.

A simple room with a bed.

“Stay right here, Bellsie! I’ll be back with some food!”

When Lazuline left the room, Shinobu noticed a picture frame of her and what seemed to be Lazuline’s father.

She grabbed it.

Shinobu doesn’t think Lazuline is the traitor anymore. Lazuline was just a spunky high school girl.

But she should still question her about her background, just in case.

“Sorry for the wait! I’m back!”

Shinobu was startled and dropped the frame.

She sheepishly picked it up and put it back on the shelf.

"Ah, that's a picture of Papa! He works in the mornings and comes home late at night. Er... sorry, but I've got some soda and some chips! I'm not exactly a cook, hehe"

"It's fine," said Shinobu, as she sat down.

"So, Lazuline... I wanted to ask you. How did you know I was Detick Bell?" asked Shinobu, taking a sip of the soda.

"Isn't it obvious that it's you, Bellsie?"

"No, I'm in my human form, I did heavy makeup, I'm virtually unnoticeable."

"No you're not. Nobody can hide their facial features. Your eyes, nose, mouth, the shape. Even if you transform and have different hair colors or whatnot, your facial features are always the same. My mentor taught me"

Shinobu spat her drink, luckily, not on the carpet floor, but back to the glass cup.

"I'm sorry... that's... what?"

"What's so funny, Bellsie?"

"Nothing, sorry! It's just... wow. You saw me because of details like that?"

"I told you, Bellsie. My mentor taught me a lot of things as a Magical Girl."

"Your mentor, huh? Was she a Magical Girl or the Master of your selection test?"

"She wans't the Master. She's the original Lapis Lazuline."

Shinobu's eyes widened.

"Wait, what do you mean the original?"

"I'm the second Lapis Lazuline. I took on her name when she retired."

"Hang on... you're telling me you're *not* Lapis Lazuline?"

"Not originally. I was Blue Comet back then. She told me she'd spent a lifetime, hundreds of years as a Magical Girl. She was tired, and she wanted a successor. She was like, super powerful, top notch in the Land of Magic, so she convinced whoever's up there to allow her name, Lapis Lazuline, to be exchangeable."

She said this all so casually.

"So you're the second?"

"Yeah. Everything she had was transferred over to me. Her suit, her name. I became Lapis Lazuline, and I wanted to live up to it."

"And she trained you for this?"

"In the mountainside yeah. Abandoned areas mostly. We needed places where we could train in solitude. She told me how to fight, how to survive, ugh, I hated those days, so tiring."

Shinobu remembered Lazuline's speed at fighting. She was always able to go straight to the Great Dragon, and she could withstand so much pain and still be in one piece.

Shinobu had gotten Lazuline wrong this whole time.

Wait, but if she wasn't the original Lapis Lazuline, and assuming the game chose them, then...

...Lazuline wasn't even supposed to be in the game. They have the *wrong* Lapis Lazuline.

Which means Lazuline was innocent, and the only reason she was so well focused on everything was because of her training.

The guilt built up inside Shinobu.

Now she was sure she had to protect her only original teammate.

"Lazuline, how's school? Are you doing okay there? Having fun?"

"I quit school... I didn't have time for school," she said casually.

Sipping her soda, she continued, "It's not like I think school sucks or anything, it's just that the original Lazuline was *very* demanding. I still play with my friends, it's just... yeah. I never liked her, but I wanted to be a hero, so I had to give it a go, y'know?"

"And your father was okay with it?"

"Papa lets me do what I want, mostly."

Her dad wouldn't have to pay tuition if Lazuline didn't go to school, but Shinobu wondered if her dad was a nice person or not.

"Hey, Lazuline. Do you know why I came here?"

"Hm? Uh... is it to come play and see me?"

Innocent as always.

"Well, not exactly. I came here to find out more about you."

"Aww, that's sweet Bellsie! I can talk about anything you want! Don't worry! You must be tired. The game overworked you, and being a detective in real life must be tough too!"

Shinobu smiled. Her work was done.

"Yeah. I think I should head home now."

"Eh?? Now? But you just came! Please, please, *pleaaaase* stay over? It'll be fun!!!"

"I, uh..."

Lazuline's eyes were filled with admiration.

Shinobu sighed, and reluctantly nodded.

☆ Shadow Gale

Mamori was in Kanoe's room.

On the room was Kanoe's PC.

Nearby was her bed, and that was where Mamori sat.

Kanoe, however, was sitting in the most... strangest position ever.

There was a chair, and on that chair, was a balance ball. The kind you would use on gyms.

On that ball was Kanoe, sitting happily.

The fact that Kanoe might be able to fall at any time is making Mamori nervous, and she can't focus.

Kanoe however, continued to talk proudly.

"The next area is the Demon's Castle. According to the game rules, once we defeat the Demon Lord, we win."

"Right."

"Mamori, back after we fought the Great Dragon, you felt sorry for it, didn't you?"

"...What?"

"Can't hide things from me, Mamori"

"Well, doesn't matter now. It's dead."

"Hmm, that's true. How are things going in your end? Good?"

"It's been okay."

"Ah, that's good. My team is also doing well so far. Combat-wise we seem to be in good shape. Perhaps you didn't know, Mamori, but apparently, Lapis Lazuline is truly a combat-based Magical Girl. It's amazing how well she fought, I don't think I've ever been so impressed with that girl. To think, she had a spunky personality that hides that powerful skill."

"Mmm" Mamori said.

Kanoe continued bouncing on the ball. She noticed Shadow Gale's expression.

"Mamori... I don't think this is the case, but... are you *jealous*?"

Mamori closed her eyes and smiled sheepishly.

"...No, my lady. I'm not."

Kanoe chuckled.

"I hope you do stick to our plan. To find the traitor, we can't be together, Mamori. This is good for you too, being independent."

"I'm not going to jeopardize the plan."

"Then continue scouting on your own, and I'll investigate my current team."

Mamori stood up.

"You're sure you can keep playing this charade, my lady?"

"If there's one person that I wouldn't lie to, it's you, Mamori. Perhaps you didn't know this, but..."

Mamori listened in,

"...I had told the other girls that your Magical Skill was to create tanks."

Mamori's eyes widened.

Pfle smiled.

Mamori blinked, “Why didn’t you tell me about this first?”

“You’re not the only one who would protect the other. I’ll be fine, Mamori. Find information, and we’ll make it. Now, will you help me to the door?”

“We don’t have to pretend in the real world, my lady.”

Pfle laughed,

“Well, you’re becoming at least a little more independent. Very well then,”

Kanoe jumped down the bouncing ball, grabbed her PC laptop, and her notebook, and walked out of the door.

“Be careful out there, okay, Mamori?” she said as she closed the door.

MASTER'S SIDE

PART 7

The rattling of the Rubik's Cube kept going and going.

The girl with glasses talked to no one, but she talked anyway.

“Snow White seemed a little mad earlier”

She continued to play with her Rubik's Cube.

“I wonder if we can get along someday.”

She sighed, and snapped her fingers.

The door leading outside changed to a mosaic pattern and slowly began to disappear.

“Soon, the players are going to go to the Demon Lord’s castle. The final conflict will begin! The final showdown! The ideal Magical Girl will be shown! I really should market this game to actual Magical Girls. One day, perhaps, hmhm.”

The girl let go of her Rubik's Cube and fiddled with her Magical Phone.

There was no reply from Fal.

“Oh, my mascot. You try and try, but in the end, you’ll have to follow what I say. That girl was smart in getting you to reveal information.”

Indeed, Pfle was someone to look out for. She had managed to get Fal to get a loophole in the Magical Candy event.

But no one will know the true identity of the Demon Lord.

That information only belonged to the Master, and the Master alone.

The Rubik's Cube continued moving its parts without the girl touching them.

CHAPTER 8

NOW, THERE IS NOTHING

☆ Nokko-Chan

As usual, Nokko-Chan was transported back into the game world. What's unusual, however, is that she was transported into the Library Area.

Around her, Lapis Lazuline, Detick Bell, and Pfle in the distance.

Nokko-Chan was surprised at this sudden change.

Detick Bell and Lazuline were also quite shocked. Shocked of the books, shocked of the area, shocked of the table, shocked at each other...

...Wait.

Nokko-Chan must've accidentally spread the 'surprised' emotion around.

Stop.

Okay.

But really, she was actually quite surprised.

Since the other two girls were confused as well, this must be Pfle's doing.

Apparently, some time before, Pfle had bought an item using the 'R' option. She got a *Starting Area Location Changer*.

While this is actually quite good news, Nokko-Chan could sense the other girls' suspicions.

If the killer had this kind of item, it would be easy for her to just kill Masked Wonder without taking the time they would normally need.

Was Pfle the killer?

Nokko-Chan knows that @NyanNyan wouldn't have any intention to kill, nor would Genopsycho.

The pool of Magical Girls is getting smaller, and the suspects are thinning.

Let's review.

Pfle had separated with Shadow Gale for some reason. We have Detick Bell and Lazuline, who invited Nokko-Chan to their group.

Then we have Team Clantail, still in one piece. Finally, we have Melville, who has disappeared off somewhere, and then Shadow Gale, who's also doing her own thing now.

10 girls left.

According to Pfle's book, the Magical Coin item still exists, so the killer, or an

accomplice, would still be out there.

But now, everyone is focused on unlocking the next area, the Demon's Castle.

There are really only two teams now, Team Clantail and Team Bell.

Nokko-Chan is not a combat Magical Girl. She doesn't believe Detick Bell and Pfle are good with fighting either, which only leaves Lazuline as their combatant.

Fortunately, Team Clantail volunteered to handle any monsters that show up.

Leonetta and Miyokata often argue, but they work well together when fighting, and Clantail isn't so bad herself.

Pechika is a bit on the timid side but they've made it work. In a way, it was kind of like Team Daisy, with most of the 3 girls being fighters.

This means that Team Bell is completely focused on figuring out how to clear the Library Area.

Unlike how the previous area tested the girls' combat skills, the Library Area tests the girls' intelligence instead.

The Area Clear mission is slightly different.

The key is the books, unfortunately the books themselves are arranged haphazardly, which Detick Bell and Pfle believed to be the key.

Some titles are out of place, some of the binders are also out of place.

Nokko-Chan and Lazuline were told to gather books that had specific characteristics, but even that was hard.

There were books whose pages were all blank, then there are books whose pages were all red... with paint.

At the end of the hallways, there was an empty bookshelf. Pfle and Shadow Gale believed that this was key.

The two girls discussed while Nokko-Chan and Lazuline continued to find more books.

Whenever a demon appeared, Lazuline took quick work of them.

"Don't thank me, thank my teacher!"

Nokko-Chan silently did.

Hopefully, this whole thing will end soon.



★ Detick Bell

Detick Bell had remembered that she was in Lazuline's room, drinking some alcohol that she bought, before suddenly being transported to the Library Area.

Apparently, Pfle's new item is a *Starting Location Changer*.

That's very useful.

According to Pfle, she got this item from the ‘R’ option in the store.

So the ‘R’ option was useful after all. If Bell had spare candy, she might even try it. Though, the game is nearly over once they clear the next area.

Now, they have to solve this mystery.

Lazuline and Nokko-Chan had found some hints to help them.

‘To clear the Library, square the circle’.

That was the hint they received.

Bell wasn’t exactly sure what to do with that hint. She had consulted with Pfle to find the best way to solve the mystery.

Pfle had told Bell that a special quality of the Library Area was that they wouldn’t be attacked if they were sitting in chairs, so for the most part, both Pfle and Detick Bell spent their time sitting and discussing.

They tried to arrange books based on title, color, bindings, they burned some books, they watered some books.

Nothing seemed to respond.

The empty bookshelf was also apparently a key property of the mystery, but Bell had no idea what to do with it.

Pfle was also thinking very hard.

In a way, Bell envied Pfle’s intelligence. Just like herself, she was a smart and intelligent girl, and Detick Bell admired these kinds of people in real life.

So now she just had to make sure she can solve this mystery.

Square the circle?

Square the circle...

Square the circle. What?

“Bellsie, Bellsie!”

Bell’s thinking was interrupted by happy yelling.

It was Lazuline.

“What is it”

“I wanna become a detective!”

“Wait, say again?”

“I’ve been thinking, and I think being a detective would be a great thing!”

“Who?”

“Me!!!”

“Why the sudden outburst?”

“Well... Bellsie, you’re just so cool and clever and I wanna be just like you! I think I can become your apprentice detective! Detective Lapis Lazuline is at your service!”

Detick Bell sighed, smiled, and nodded.

“Alright then, as your first job, you should continue looking for more books we might need.”

“Roger! Oh, but before that, I found another hint!”

Lazuline passed the hint over to Detick Bell.

‘Begin With Me’.

The hint was in the form of a book.

‘Begin With Me’.

That was the literal title as well.

Pfle rubbed her chin.

“Could I have a look at that?” asked Pfle.

She went to her Magic Carpet and placed it on the beginning of the bookshelf.

“*Begin With Me* huh? Good job, Lazuline.”

Pfle smiled as she looked for other books. It looked like she had all the things figured out.

Pfle began putting books upon books lined up in the shelves, but Detick Bell couldn’t see any pattern.

...Wait.

Begin With Me had 3 words in the title.

The next book had 1 word in the title.

The next had 4.

The book titles didn’t matter, just the number of words. Because if you count the number of words in the title in order, Pfle’s arranging them like...

...3.141592653589793238462643383279502884197169399375105820974944592

Click

The gate opened.

They had arranged the books according to Pi.

They squared the circle... Pi...

Next, the Demon’s Castle.

☆ Shadow Gale

If there’s one thing Shadow Gale was glad about in this game, it’s that smells and dirt won’t transfer back into real life.

Shadow Gale isn't picky, but she's not exactly a fan of the moldy damp smell of the Underground Area.

She had purchased several tools from the shop, and modified it to her own whim.

She heard the roar of a Great Dragon. While her heart jumped at first, she was calm, since she was prepared.

When the Great Dragon came, she used her self-made knife launcher to launch the *Dragon Killing Knife*, killing the Great Dragon instantly.

She also got the Dragon Shield that the boss of the area dropped, just in case.

While the rest of the girls were in the Library Area, Shadow Gale was collecting information and trying to find out who the killer is back in the Underground Area.

In the more forbidden and restricted parts of the map, there were a lot of traps to watch out for as well.

Disarming them would be simple, but also time consuming.

She had to remember her goal.

There was a killer in their midst, and Shadow Gale will find her.

☆ Pechika

The next area is the Demon's Castle.

Contrary to what Pechika had thought, the castle itself was marble, and the inside was polished clean. So much so that the floor reflected the Magical Girls.

One by one, Pechika saw all the Magical Girls gather at the entrance.

Of course, the 3 teammates of hers are here.

Pfle was riding her magic carpet.

Detick Bell, Lazuline, and Nokko-Chan were here as well.

Appearing out of thin air was Melville, long-absent for a while.

And finally, Shadow Gale, in the corner.

The main entrance had a beautiful painting of a woman with wings growing out from the back.

There were also statues of beautiful and grotesque demonic creatures. Fitting for the Demon Lord's castle.

Written on a large door on the top,

To Proceed Forward, Thou Must Work as One

They have to team up, even though one of them is a killer.

The door opened, and a long narrow hallway appeared.

Carefully, they walked one by one.

Miyokata walked in front of Pechika.

“Don’t worry, Pechika! I will protect you!” she said with a smile.

“Mm, yeah... Thanks, Miyokata”

Miyokata nodded. Then, her eyes widened.

“Wait, Stop Stop!!!”

Everyone stopped, the voice came from Lazuline.

“What’s up?” asked Leonetta.

Lazuline looked around, “What do you mean *what’s up?* There’s a trap on that floor *right there!*”

The other Magical Girls were confused. To them, there was nothing on the floor.

“What?”

“What did you see?”

“I don’t see anything”

Lazuline was insistent,

“You guys! It just *looks* like a normal floor, that’s clearly booby trapped though!”

“...Well I don’t see it.”

“Aarrgh...”

Clap!

Pfle clapped her hands to get everyone’s attention.

“It appears Lazuline may have sensed some kind of pressure plate floor. I don’t doubt Lazuline’s abilities. I only need to test it so that we can pass through without harm.”

Leonetta raised her hand.

“I’ve got a suggestion”

Before they knew it, the statue that they saw in the great hall started moving. Its weight and size made it move slowly, but it continued to move.

The other Magical Girls were prepared to fight, but Leonetta just smiled as the marble statue continued to walk past the Magical Girls.

It walked on to the trap, and then.

Boom!

A large gigantic explosion on the marble floor.

“Trap’s gone!” said Lazuline.

“So it’s one-time,” murmured Pfle.

A shrill shriek of joy came from Leonetta.

“My powers are actually *useful* now!!!”

Pechika understood that feeling quite well. A useless power finally becoming useful. That was something that Pechika experienced a while back.

For most of the game, Leonetta had been contributing by fighting, but she never got to use her Magical Skill.

And so the Magical Girls continued to traverse the castle.

Considering Lazuline’s perception and incredible eyesight, even compared to other Magical Girls, she led the way.

She’d meticulously spot every trap laid out. When several monsters showed up, she even used those traps against them, by standing nearby and teleporting as soon as monsters show up.

They continued, passing through the next room, and on, and on, and on.

They went straight, went right, went straight, went right.

“Are we going through the same rooms?” asked Leonetta.

Pfle checked her map.

“No, we’re in some kind of spiral-like maze, but in a square. Similar to a labyrinth. The final point should be nearby.”

And when they reached the final part, they found a large room, devoid of anything. A dead end?

But Pfle went in, and she used her Magical Phone.

“The shop. We’ve reached it,” said Pfle

“Oh thank god, I’m starving!” grumbled Leonetta.

Pfle purchased a large pot, intricate in design, with some demonic motifs on it.

“Pechika, would you mind cooking for us? I heard your food is amazing,” said Pfle with a smile.

Pechika smiled sheepishly. There were more than twice as many people now from her usual 3 customers.

How will she cook for them all?

Then Pechika had an idea, the rubble from the explosive traps. She grabbed all the marble that she could, and in an instant, transformed them all into vegetable soup.

Lunch is served!



Some of the girls were shocked when they tasted it. Some ate slowly, others munched in with excitement.

“A-Are you serious!? You’ve been monopolizing all this *food* this whole time, Pecchy?? Aaaah!!!” Lazuline cried out as she gobbled up the vegetable soup.

“L-Lazuline, be polite,” said Detick Bell.

“B-But... This soup... I don’t wanna eat anything else other than this... The taste is so.... Holy Shit!!!”

“Lazuline!” Detick Bell shouted, slightly embarrassed.

Lazuline gobbled and gobbled endlessly.

Detick Bell ate while trying to calm her down.

Pfle sipped her soup elegantly, happily sipping it.

Shadow Gale kept an eye out for Pfle, but didn’t stop eating as well. Looks like she enjoyed it.

Melville ate with a smile, oftentimes muttering something Pechika couldn’t exactly understand.

Nokko-Chan helped serve the food, like an actual maid. She was actually pretty good at it, almost as if this is natural for her.

As usual, Miyokata and Leonetta ate happily and are proud of Pechika.

Clantail’s tail wagged as usual, but it shook more widely and rapidly than ever before.

Pechika felt really happy.

It’s times like these where she can really feel appreciated.

She wasn’t good at fighting, she could kind of search, and she can’t solve any clues or mysteries, but cooking? This was where she shone.

She wished it could be like this forever.

But all good things must come to an end.

The group prepared once more to march into the Demon’s Castle, now with a full stomach and full energy.

☆ Shadow Gale

The party took note of their inventory.

The shop in this area was expensive, fitting for a final area.

There was only one stock of a Weapon +10 and a Shield +10.

It’s clear the Game Master must want them to work together to defeat the Demon Lord. So, with everyone agreeing, they pooled together their Magical Candy and purchased the two items.

They gave the Weapon +10 to Melville, since she knew how to use her weapon best.

The Shield +10 they gave to Clantail.

“Mamori, you still have your Dragon Shield, correct?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Good. That shield is stronger than the average shield.”

The strength of this Great Dragon shield was comparable to that of a Shield +12, so Shadow Gale kept it.

Shadow Gale also made some smaller purchases in the store.

A *Stun Gun*. An Electric-type weapon that can inflict Electricity damage on a monster. When used on another player, guarantees instant knock-out.

Finally, a large *Flamethrower*. However, sneakily, Shadow Gale had improved it by shrinking it while maintaining its power.

She tested it by firing it upwards. A large jet of flame blasted from the device. Some of the girls shrieked in surprise.

“Oho, if we defeat the Demon Lord with that, that would be very *funny*,” claimed Miyokata.

“Speaking of which, do we know what affinities or types the monsters in this area have?” asked Clantail.

Pfle consulted her Monster Picture Book, but found that information on the monsters in the castle were all ‘????’.

“Guess we’ll find out,” muttered Leonetta.

The Magical Girls got back into a line, with the shield in the front, and Melville ready to shoot anything.

It was as if they were a bomb disposal team.

Shadow Gale was at the very back, with the Dragon Shield, to protect the rear from anything.

Miyokata was behind Pechika, and occasionally nudged her to move, muttering that ‘it’ll be fine, Pechika!’.

Everytime she did, Pechika made a little yelp.

They kept moving on, with Lazuline in the lead. She’d disable and/or activate the traps.

Since the maps go in a spiral direction, the amount of distance they cover lessens every time. Until finally...

...They stepped into a large room.

In the room was a large door. According to Lazuline, it wasn’t trapped, so she pushed through it.

And on the other side were lined up knights in shining armor.

Slowly, they began moving.

“Oh. Well, crap.”

The Magical Girls raised their weapons and shields.

From Nokko-Chan's position, she could only see what seemed to be knights and some kind of robot.

It was hard to sense its expression, since their faces were either covered in helmets or visors.

The robot flew to the sky, and from it shot out a small object with white smoke.

A missile!?

Shadow Gale raised her shield, and the blast shook the room. That's when all the Magical Girls rushed in.

The white smoke obscured much of the room, but Nokko-Chan could see Pfle on her magic carpet trying to find info on the enemy.

"Hell Knights! Their weakness is-" Pfle cut herself off with a gasp, a missile was headed straight for her.

Nokko-Chan slid across the room, equipped her shield, and held it out in front of Pfle.

The blast vibrated so hard that Nokko-Chan felt pain in her arms, but they were both safe.

Pfle nodded and flew away from the fight to safety.

The smoke cleared and Nokko-Chan could see and analyze the battle clearly.

Melville was darting about on the walls, shooting harpoons with her bow towards the flying robots.

Clantail was fighting off two knights with her lower body being an octopus.

Leonetta and Miyokata were working together to take down a robot, while Pechika would shield them from attacks.

Detick Bell used her cane to fight, while Lazuline was handling over 3 knights with ease, teleporting every time.

Shadow Gale used her giant scissors to cut one Demon Knight in half.

These enemies were nearly as strong as the Magical Girls.

Then, Nokko-Chan saw the one knight that stared directly at her.

It ran in an attempt to hit her.

She bolted in the other direction, holding up her shield in the back. The knight swung its sword and swatted the shield away.

Instinctively, Nokko-Chan materialized her Mop +7, and blocked the next swing of the sword.

The huge sword's clash caused her to be launched across into a wall, her shoulders hitting it. Pain filling up.

The knight continued on towards her.

She wanted to scream, she couldn't fight off this thing.

Help.

Someone?

Anyone?

Fight off this thing!

Then she heard a scream. The scream was full of anger and rage, and echoed across the whole room, so much so that Nokko-Chan wanted to cover her ears.

A large round shield whacked the knight away, and a Magical Girl picked it back up and pounded on the large knight.

Nokko-Chan saw the girl.

It was Pechika.

Pechika was full of anger and vengeance, beating down on the Hell Knight.

Nokko-Chan boosted those emotions, and for the first time, Pechika moved with the speed and strength of a true Magical Girl.

Nokko-Chan spread the feelings of rage and anger around the room.

Fight.

Fight.

Fight!

Miyokata's pet dragon appeared and mauled the Hell Knight, while Melville continued to shoot down the robots.

Clantail's octopus legs grabbed each spear of the knights, and slammed the knights down to the marble floor.

Leonetta appeared to be controlling the dead knights to fight each other.

Soon, it was all over.

Dead scraps of plastic and metal littered the floor.

The girls took a short break before continuing again.

A door at the end of the hallway.

Lazuline looked it over.

"Not trapped at all!" she said.

"This is the final part," said Pfle.

Everyone looked at each other and nodded. They prepared their assault, and Lazuline kicked the door open.

On that room was a large throne. A chair made of marble. It was a large, circular, and *empty* room.

Slowly, the girls took a step forward, anticipating any attacks from the Demon Lord.

But there was nothing.

“Huh? Where’s the Demon Lord?” asked Lazuline.

They began searching the entire room, high and low, in every nook and cranny.

“There’s some ancient writing carved behind this throne,” said Detick Bell.

Pfle approached it and used her *Translator-Kun* to scan it.

‘The Demon Lord is not here at the moment. The Demon Lord has been chased by 15 Magical Girls the whole game. Good job! Thank you so much for coming! Due to the fact that the Demon Lord’s base has been broken into, Monsters will now all level up!’

Confused looks were shared among all the Magical Girls.

Then, their Magical Phones rang.

A new text.

‘Congratulations! You’ve reached the final area! Unfortunately, looks like there’s no Demon Lord to be found. Keep trying! In the meantime, reaching this area is not a waste of time. You have all fulfilled the requirements for the *Memory Restoration Program*. Congratulations!’.

Clantail looked at Pfle with confusion.

“...Where’s the Demon Lord?”

Pfle simply frowned.

☆ Pechika

Pfle had called for help from Fal.

Unfortunately, it seems that even Fal was dumbfounded.

“What do you mean there’s no Demon Lord, Pon?”

“There’s nothing here, Fal.”

“That’s impossible. I’m telling you the truth that the Demon Lord being killed is the conditions to clear the game, Pon!”

Fal rotated around and paced in the air.

“Maybe... The Demon Lord’s hiding?”

“Hiding?”

“In a previous area, maybe? The Monsters have leveled up, so there’s no point to that function if you’re all just going to stay here, Pon!”

“I guess that would make sense.”

“I’m sorry it turned out like this, Pon. I wish you all the best!”

“Thank you, Fal.”

Pfle turned off her Magical Phone.

Pechika, Miyokata, and Leonetta sat in a chair in the Library Area.

Many of the girls had decided to split up to cover the areas, and these three got the Library Area.

The Demon Lord was hiding somewhere, so they looked and looked.

They searched for secret entrances or anything of that sort, but found nothing.

There was no sign of anything at all.

So now they were all sitting in a chair near a desk.

Miyokata and her pet dragon were idly playing around on the desk.

Leonetta tapped her fingers on the desk.

“Dammit, I can’t handle this anymore, we were supposed to be free *now!*”

Leonetta slammed the desk. The vibration sent several books off the shelf.

“Hey, don’t be so loud. Fal said that the Demon Lord exists”

“You trust that thing?”

“How else are we to clear the game?”

Miyokata and Leonetta were at it again.

“I’m not just gonna wait around until someone finds it.”

“Yes, but being angry will not solve anything!”

Their voices got louder and louder.

“What do *you* know? You haven’t done any fighting at all! You were just scouting and scouting the whole damn game!”

“At least I have done something to progress us!”

Miyokata’s dragon pet growled.

It jumped on Leonetta’s right arm and chomped on it.

Leonetta screamed out in pain.

She tried to shake off the little dragon, but it won’t let go.

Miyokata screamed as well, trying to tell the dragon to stop biting, but the dragon still won’t let go.

Pechika wanted to close her ears, this was a stressful situation.

Then, Leonetta extended claws from her other hand, and she stabbed the dragon in the throat.

Immediately, the small dragon released its grip and fell to the ground, with a pool of blood on it.

Miyokata screamed and cried out, trying to heal the dragon, but potions wouldn’t work on monsters.

Leonetta, hands dripping in blood, looked at her surroundings.

Her eyes became hollow. She slowly glanced at Pechika.

“...Pechika.”

Pechika saw what happened and gasped.

She looked at Leonetta while biting her lip.



“...I think... It’s for the best that I leave. You’ve both been good people. I’ve... I think it’s best if I just... go... So, goodbye.”

She turned around and began walking away.

“Hey! Leonetta! You can’t just walk away like that! Hey! *Come back!*” screamed Miyokata.

“Leonetta!” Pechika shouted, still sitting on the chair.

Miyokata reached out over to Leonetta.

Then Pechika saw a black fog.

“Miyokata, look out!”

Snake-like black demons appeared and began wrapping itself around Miyokata’s body.

Leonetta turned around and gasped, but another demon pushed Leonetta away.

Leonetta managed to regain her balance enough to sit on a chair. Safety.

But the chair slowly morphed into the form of another demon.

It’s never done that before.

The demon whacked Leonetta down to the floor.

Her body now prone, the demon pushed her body over as it smashed into a bookshelf. Supported on a solid object, the demon began kicking Leonetta’s head.

One kick.

Two kicks.

Three kicks.

The sound of cracking wood.

Pechika tried to interfere but another demon tripped her legs.

That’s when she saw it.

The snake demons entered Miyokata’s body.

Miyokata began choking, blood pouring out of her nose and mouth. Then, black fog seeped out of her.

Miyokata’s body lost power, and she fell face forward.

The other demons then dematerialized.

Pechika walked over to Miyokata, tried to use the healing potion, but it wouldn’t work.

It wouldn’t work...

...That means...

...Miyokata was gone.

She heard footsteps.

Leonetta walked over to her, staggering from the beating she received.

“Leoneta! You’re okay!” Pechika said.

Leonetta saw Miyokata’s body.

She fell on her knees.

Her eyes were hollow, she murmured out in a small voice.

“...What have I done...”

MASTER'S SIDE

PART 8

“There’s no Demon Lord, Pon”

“Come again?”

“There is no Demon Lord, Pon”

The girl with glasses laughed as Fal spoke that.

“False. I made the game clear message obvious. There *is* a Demon Lord.”

“But the throne room was empty.”

“Just because I called the area the Demon’s Castle, doesn’t mean the Demon Lord will just wait for them there, my little Fal.”

“So where?”

“That’s a secret”

“...You’re hiding something, Pon.”

“Fal, if there’s one thing I’m not, it’s a liar. Everything I’ve given in the game is the truth. They must defeat the Demon Lord to win, and that hasn’t changed. Just because they haven’t found the Demon Lord doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist, hmhm...”

The girl with the glasses spun her chair around happily.

“By the way, I wonder how Snow White’s doing, hmm?”

Snow White’s Side

The killings are happening again.

But she can’t just stop it. This Master has prepared. Her powers are also extraordinary. Snow White didn’t sense anything when she tried to read her mind.

Well, this time, she’ll just have to improvise.

First, she’ll need information.

She went to the Land of Magic’s *Magical Girl Department*. Snow White’s not normally used to going there, since she prefers field work.

That department has a section that deals with rogue Magical Girls.

A file on almost all Magical Girls.

Time to find it.

She approached the head of the department, wearing white robes, sitting in a chair. Stereotypical magical attire.

“Snow White?”

“I need info”

“I thought you were to handle the situation”

“I *am* handling it. I need info.”

“You’d have to go through procedure, we can’t just *give* everything”

“There’s not enough time, six have died, more will die soon.”

“I’m sorry, Snow White, but we sent you in because we thought you could handle this.”

“I haven’t given up yet. I just need to know information about the Master. If you won’t help me, lead me in the right direction.”

“You could search our archives, but for master access you’d have to have a higher clearance.”

“What, is there a password?”

“Yes”

“Are you cleared to use it?”

“Well, yes. I am a Head after all.”

“Could you tell me your username and password?”

“...Is this supposed to be a joke, Snow White?”

Nope.

Snow White’s got the Head’s mind on the password. Now to read it. If there’s one thing people are conditioned to do, it’s that if you ask them about a topic, they will unconsciously think about the topic.

Snow White can read her mind.

She got the password and username.

Snow White smiled,

“Well, it was worth a shot. Thanks for your help!”

Snow White headed out as fast as she could, she was running out of time to save those girls.

CHAPTER 9

WE ARE ALL HER CHILDREN

☆ Detick Bell

The other Magical Girls were looking for the Demon Lord. Bell was also searching for the Demon Lord herself.

Everyone split up into multiple areas, and Bell had gotten the Demon's Castle.

Thanks to some hints from Fal, she knew that the Demon's Castle Area only had Event Monsters.

This means the enemies won't respawn.

She should be able to conduct her investigation without having to fight anyone in here.

First, the throne room.

Last time, she had confirmed that there was nothing here, but this time, she was alone and had time.

Using her magnifying glass, she tried to search for any possible clues. Fingerprints? Footprints? Anything?

Why is there a throne but no one to sit on it?

Maybe this room was just for decoration?

Tapping on the walls, checking for hollow spots, maybe there's a secret entrance that she didn't know about somewhere?

It's tempting to try and find it, but after all her attempts, there simply was nothing new to be gained from this location.

Oh well, there's really no point.

Negative information is still information. At least she can confidently say that there are no leads in the actual throne room.

Now to check every other room in this castle.

A clean sweep through everything. Boring, but necessary. Besides, this is what detectives are supposed to do.

Finally, she reached the terrace area. This was where the Shop was. Again, Bell investigated every nook and cranny she could find here.

Nothing.

No hollow walls, no secret entrances. Nothing.

It's been a good few minutes. If any Magical Girls saw something, they should've reported it by now.

Hmm...

...There was something she *hasn't* checked.

She opened the Shop from her Magical Phone.

Browsing over to the items section, she noticed something new.

Memory Restoration Program.

It's cheap.

It's cheaper than anything she had seen in any shop in the game.

"What... is this?"

Bell understood the meaning of the device, but she didn't understand the purpose. What happens if she got this?

She immediately purchased the app.

Bell activated it.

The screen on her Magical Phone read,

'*Would you like your memories to be restored?*'

Crack!

A sharp pain and a loud noise came from behind Detick Bell.

Her face was cold. Her hands were cold. Her body was cold.

Why?

Why is it so cold?

Oh...

...She was on the marble floor. Her hands and legs sprawled about, Magical Phone still in her right hand.

She wanted to stand, but her body won't obey.

The back of her head was numb.

She heard footsteps.

There are no monsters here.

So it must be...

...A Magical Girl.

Detick Bell understood what was going on.

It's the killer. She was targeted.

Why was she targeted?

Why was she attacked?

The... Oh...

Memory Restoration...

Detick Bell was afraid. She didn't want to die. But, the killer will probably take the Memory Restoration Program away, just like Masked Wonder's Miracle Coin.

That means Bell had to protect her Magical Phone.

Her Magical Skill was useless in the game world, but it still worked.

Now, she could probably make use of it.

She had to pass her Magical Phone over.

Someone she trusted with her life.

She had to give this to her.

Lazuline.

Detick Bell kissed the floor. A face slowly began to appear.

"T-The blue..." every word hurts her brain. Her head felt painful.

She passed the Phone over to the face's mouth on the floor.

"Give this... to the blue... Magical Girl..."

Detick Bell hoped it would be enough. She knew the killer would finish her off.

I'm sorry, Lazuline.

☆ Nokko-Chan

Nokko-Chan's Magical Phone rang.

It looks like it was time.

'Everyone please gather round to the square, Pon'

She was used to this. Everyone was used to this.

They all appeared at the square. All 10 Magical Gi-

Wait...

...Not 10, 8.

Two girls were missing.

Clantail, who was searching in the Grasslands Area with Nokko-Chan, had looked around for Miyokata.

"...Pechika, where's Miyokata?"

Pechika had tears on her eyes. Leonetta's face was hung downwards.

Pechika explained everything. The demons, the fight, the argument before, Miyokata was gone.

But there was another girl who's missing.

"Hey... Where's Bellsie?" asked Lazuline, slightly confused.

“Bellsie? Bellsie? Anyone seen her?”

Fal materialized in the middle of the Wasteland Town.

“Thank you all for coming, Pon!”

“Fal! Have you seen Bellsie?”

“Teleportation is automatic, Pon. She should be here, Pon!”

“Yeah, but... she’s not”

Fal’s face froze.

“If she’s not here, Pon... then, there’s a high chance that... she may have died... Pon.”

Lazuline stood there.

“Wha... No, no no, Bellsie’s safe, there’s no monsters in the Demon Castle, right?”

“There isn’t, Pon”

“So how can she just *die*? Bellsie won’t commit suicide! She’d be here with us!”

Everyone else had assumed the worst.

Lazuline denied it all.

“No, that’s impossible. There’s no one there to kill her, so she can’t be dead. Fal? Fal!”

Fal, with slow movements, ignored Lazuline and moved on.

“Today’s event isn’t random, Pon. A fixed event for clearing the Demon’s Castle”

“Hey, Fal! Are you listening to me!? C’mon, Fal! Tell me where Bellsie is!”

“...This is a hint coming straight from the Master herself, Pon. Please look at your Magical Phones.”

Nokko-Chan opened her phone.

‘Congratulations Magical Girls. You’re one step closer to being the ideal Magical Girl. Here’s a great big hint for you. The Demon Lord isn’t just any enemy. No, the Demon Lord... is one of YOU! That’s right, all this time, one of you has been a traitor, whose goal is to eliminate all of you. That’s their victory condition. Try your best to root out the traitor! Good luck!’

Everyone’s face was blank.

Everyone looked at each other.

They knew there was a killer in their midst, but they had no idea that the killer could be the Demon Lord.

Worse... They’ll have to kill her if they want to win.

Lazuline’s face reddened with anger.

“Fal... Fal, what the hell is this?”

“Lazuline, wait!” Nokko-Chan tried calling out to her

“Fal, where’s Bellsie. Tell me what happened to Bellsie. Fal!”

Fal sighed a deep breath. He looked sad, and he disappeared.

“He’s not allowed to say anything, Lazuline,” said Pfle.

“But, Bellsie... She’s not... She can’t be...” Lazuline’s face was on the verge of tears.

“We have to go back! Back to the castle. Bellsie was there!” she exclaimed.

“Alright. But, Lazuline... are you prepared for the worst?” asked Pfle.

Lazuline stood there, and she just began walking.

☆ Shadow Gale

The Demon’s Castle.

Everyone stuck together. With the Demon Lord’s identity unknown, and a confirmed killer in the midst, they all kept a lookout for each other.

When they entered the Demon’s Castle Area, Shadow Gale had expected the worst to happen.

They had reached the terrace, and the smell struck her nose.

It was the same smell that she had when she found Masked Wonder’s body.

Then she noticed the red puddle in the middle of the room.

And she noticed a body, lying face down on the floor.

A cape, stockings, and a coat, with a cap as well.

Detick Bell.

Lazuline walked over to the body, her shoes stepping on the blood puddle. She looked at it for a good 10 seconds.

Then she fell on her knees.

“...Hey... This is a joke, right?” she said, as her hand gripped Detick Bell’s hand.

Tears dripped from her face, mixing with the pool of blood.

Shadow Gale and Pfle merely looked over at Lazuline.

Clantail turned away from the body. Leonetta as well.

Pechika began crying.

Nokko-Chan hung her head.

Melville shook her head.

One of these people killed her.



“Are you the blue Magical Girl?”

All voices stopped. The girls tensed up. The voice wasn't female. It was the voice of a man.

But who?

“If you are, I was told to give this to you.”

Lazuline looked down to see a face, on the floor, staring at her.

From its mouth, he spat out a Magical Phone.

Lazuline was dumbfounded, the other Magical Girls were also confused.

Pfle nodded,

“This was Detick Bell’s Magical Skill. To talk to buildings, right? She must’ve known the killer would take whatever’s on her phone, and she hid it. She hid it to give it to you, Lazuline.”

Lapis Lazuline’s red tear-stained face looked up to Pfle. Then at Bell’s Magical Phone.

She picked it up slowly.

“Bellsie...”

She turned it on, and went to the items screen.

“What. What’s this?”

She showed the screen to the rest of the Magical Girls.

Memory Restoration Program.

Pfle’s eyebrows were raised.

“Lazuline, may I examine the phone?” Pfle asked, with her hands outstretched, on her magic carpet.

Lazuline hesitated for a moment. Then, she reluctantly handed the phone over.

Pfle activated the app.

It asked a simple question.

‘Would you like your memories to be restored?’

“What is this?” muttered Pfle to herself.

She pressed the button labeled ‘Yes’. The button labeled ‘No’ disappeared.

‘Congratulations, Magical Girls. Your memories will be restored’.

Shadow Gale felt an intense nausea-inducing pain in her head. Her head began feeling dizzy, as many things seemed to be entering her mind.

Not to mention the time was up... Log-Out had occurred.

Shadow Gale was back in her room, in real life, but the dizziness was still progressing.

She felt like she was about to puke.

Then, she remembered everything.

She fell down to the floor unconscious.

☆ Pechika

Pechika remembered.

Everything came back to her.

It's been a few hours since the log-out period. Pechika was sitting at the park with Ninomiya-Kun.

He was eating her food, and she was eating as well. They were having fun.

However, Pechika had some other things on her mind.

For once, everything made sense.

When she was fighting the enemies in the Demon's Castle, a flame seemed to have flickered inside Pechika. A flame that was shut out.

The willingness to protect her teammates, to fight. She felt angry at that moment.

She fought relentlessly, without giving up.

She was fierce, she was furious, she was ferocious.

And... at that moment in time, she felt... elated.

Excited, happy, adrenaline and fighting made her excited at that time. After that, she blamed the feeling on the fact that she was protecting her friends.

In the Library, she was back to the Pechika that was afraid of fighting.

But now, she understood why she hates fighting. Why she didn't want to fight.

It's not because she couldn't fight.

The reason why she was afraid to fight, wasn't because she was afraid of the actual fighting.

It's because she didn't want to turn into *her*.

"Mmm, I really wanna know how you made this y'know?" asked Ninomiya-Kun.

Pechika turned around, and giggled.

"Trade secret," she said while winking.

Even her crush on Ninomiya-Kun made sense.

For the longest time, Pechika had just thought that her feelings for Ninomiya-Kun came out of nowhere. No basis. Just a crush.

She was happy around him, because he reminded her of someone.

"*Don't cry, Pechika. Okay? Don't cry! You're okay!*"

"*But you're not okay! Please don't leave me like this*"

"*It's going to be alright... We were stupid... but you have to save yourself, okay, Pechika?*"

"*I can't just-*"

"*Pechika... you need to run now!*"

Voices came back to her head.

Ninomiya-Kun reminded her of someone close to her.

A few years ago, when Pechika had just started out being a Magical Girl, she had met someone.

Another Magical Girl.

She couldn't recall her name.

However, she would always be with Pechika. Pechika would always make food for the both of them.

The one thing this girl liked was baseball.

Pechika would always watch her games, and then they'd have adventures as Magical Girls. Because this girl, she was a bit rebellious.

Truth be told, Pechika was a bit rebellious too back then.

One day, they made a visit to N-City's abandoned ski resort.

N-City was a large city, at the center of Japan's rapidly growing city infrastructure.

N-City was a mixture of classic architecture, and modern futurism.

The two Magical Girls were visiting not the city itself, but a mountainous area located just off the city's outskirts.

This used to be a ski lodge, a place where tourists would go to enjoy the nice Winter Holidays.

Now it's long-since abandoned.

But they knew that someone lived here. They knew that there was supposedly a Magical Girl who lived here.

Pechika blamed her recklessness. She and her friend were looking for adventure.

Who cared about the boring life of school? Pechika was going to have the adventure of her life!

Plus, they were strong, powerful Magical Girls. They felt invincible.

When they reached the cottage however, everything turned silent.

The animals were clearly there, but there was no noise. The wind made no sound.

There was absolutely no sound whatsoever.

It's as if someone turned off the sound of the world.

Then, from the rooftop of the cottage, they saw a woman playing the flute. The flute was beautiful sounding, harmonious, loud.

Based on her outfit and her looks, she was a Magical Girl.

She looked beautiful. She had blonde hair, a green coat, white shirt inside.

Her body was covered all over with vines.

Dark red roses bloomed from her hair, back, and coat. Gigantic, powerful, dark red roses. Her pupils were blood red.

She looked calm. Everything about her was like looking at something chaotic but beautiful.

And her ears.

Elf ears.

She noticed them, and jumped down from the cottage.

“Good evening, you two. It’s nice to have guests”

Pechika and her friend only stared back, unsure of how to respond. The Magical Girl in front of them continued,

“Allow me to introduce myself. My name is The Forest Musician, Cranberry. I’m looking for powerful Magical Girls. Tell me, do you consider yourselves that?” she asked in a calm but sinister tone.

When the Samurai girl interrogated Pechika, she said she was looking for a musician.

This was her.

The Forest Musician Cranberry.

Cranberry.

Pechika was afraid of fighting, because she loved to fight. She loved the sensation.

So did Cranberry.

If Pechika continued to fight, she’ll become like Cranberry.

That’s something that should not happen.

“Oh, I’m full. Thanks for the meal!”

Ninomiya-Kun said with a smile.

Pechika smiled, stood up, and gave Ninomiya-Kun a light kiss on the cheek.

Ninomiya-Kun was surprised.

Pechika giggled,

“Glad you enjoyed the meal! It’s getting late, I’ll see you around, ‘kay?”

She turned her back from Ninomiya-Kun and left.

☆ Shadow Gale

Mamori was lying in Kanoe’s bed.

She had awoken from a horrible headache.

On the bed, sitting down, looking down upon her, was Kanoe.

“You’re up, Mamori.”

“...I remember.”

“I remember, too.”

“I wish I could forget it all again.”

“Me too, Mamori.”

The Forest Musician, Cranberry.

That was the name of the Master that supervised their trials. Trials that Shadow Gale and Pfle managed to survive.

Those trials involved killing, and two of them made it out.

However...

“...We did horrible things,” said Kanoe

“There’s no changing the past anymore, my lady.” sighed Mamori.

Kanoe stood up.

“That’s why we couldn’t remember. Our memories were sealed off. We couldn’t remember her name.”

Mamori rolled over, laying on her side, her face facing a wall. She didn’t want to look at Kanoe.

Kanoe continued,

“Cranberry had a trait. She only came after the strongest Magical Girls. Something that our killer has been doing for a long time. Even though we don’t know how she killed, we know that she’s following the same principles as Cranberry.”

Mamori, without looking at Kanoe, replied,

“What are you going to do?”

“We stick to the plan. We find out who among us is the killer, and we’ll have to use everything we’ve got to do it.”

Kanoe was trying to protect Mamori. That’s why she separated herself from her in the group.

Kanoe walked over to the door, and closed it.

Kanoe hasn’t changed from before.

Mamori sighed.

A long time ago, Shadow Gale and Pfle were part of a selection test. Trials that would determine who will become a Magical Girl.

This test was different than most of the others.

Losers that get eliminated are killed.

There was only supposed to be one survivor.

The organizer of this test was called Cranberry.

The Forest Musician, Cranberry.

The participants... 100 Magical Girls.

All fighting to the death.

The only reason Mamori survived was Pfle.

Pfle had manipulated the other Magical Girls.

She had made them allies, she had made them question themselves, she had made them fight each other, she had made them protect them.

This wasn't a skill that Pfle had as a Magical Girl. This was a skill that Pfle had as a human girl, raised to become something that society wanted to see.

Pfle is a master of deception and manipulation.

She knows exactly what to say and what to appear like, she can play people like a puppetmaster.

And she did.

All to protect Shadow Gale.

An agreement made with Cranberry.

"I want the both of us to survive," said Pfle.

"What will you give me in return?" asked Cranberry.

"I'll make this the most interesting test you'll ever have".

And she did.

Cranberry enjoyed watching Pfle manipulate the other girls into killing and fighting one another.

Backstabbing, Deals, Alliances, all were in an attempt to protect the one person Pfle cared more than anyone else in the world.

Shadow Gale. Mamori.

At the end of it all, Pfle, covered in blood, approached Cranberry.

"Entertaining enough?" she asked.

"Hahaha, wonderful! An amazing show! 98 girls... All played like puppets. You have strength. I'd even consider fighting you," said Cranberry with a grin.

"I would lose. This is not the kind of strength you seek."

"Hmm?"

"You want to fight a strong, worthy opponent. My strength is in the mind. You seek physical strength, Cranberry. This is not the fight you would want."

"Hmm... Perhaps. One day, I'll find the one Magical Girl that will reignite that spark."

“...When you do, I hope she kills you.”

Cranberry grinned.

The agreement was made. The deal was honored.

Pfle and Shadow Gale were allowed to survive.

When Pfle told this to Shadow Gale, both were happy. Pfle smiled, they hugged each other, they were happy.

Shadow Gale didn't know about the deal.

She didn't have to know.

She doesn't have to know anything.

But she found out.

Then her memory was altered.

But now... she remembered.

Masked Wonder was killed.

Cherna Mouse too.

Detick Bell as well.

Murders.

The killings have started again. The killings... just like before.

How many Magical Girls did Kanoe manipulate and kill to protect Mamori? How many Magical Girls did Kanoe backstab? She couldn't remember the details.

Mamori remembered Kanoe's words.

'If there's one person I wouldn't lie to, it's you, Mamori'.

But that in itself was a lie.

Kanoe never told her about those 98 Magical Girls she played like a chessmaster.

She made them kill each other.

Kanoe was ruthless.

Mamori had always known she would do anything to protect Kanoe and vice versa, but she never thought Kanoe would go as far as to manipulate and backstab... and murder... others to do it.

Was Kanoe the killer?

Masked Wonder died first, the only one who would know who it is was Kanoe. She had her wheelchair, she could travel that far.

Then Cherna. Kanoe checked her terminal last...

...What about Detick Bell?

Was Kanoe the killer.

She had doubts. She always did. She had doubts when Kanoe wanted to fight Cherna. She had doubts when Kanoe wanted to separate teams.

She assumed Kanoe had a plan... but...

What if Mamori wrong about Kanoe all this time.

Kanoe was not in her room anymore. Mamori was alone.

Mamori dumped her face into the pillow.

For the first time in her life, Mamori was crying.

MASTER'S SIDE

PART 9

The Forest Musician Cranberry.

When she was a young Magical Girl, she was part of a selection test that went wrong.

One of the Magical Girls had summoned a demon, a monster of some kind, the details were vague, but...

...Something happened in that test.

Most of the Magical Girls were killed horribly.

Cranberry survived. Not only did she survive, she also killed the monster.

A sort of post-traumatic disorder happened in her.

She was addicted to bloodshed. Fighting until her bones would break, or her enemies.

Then, she was approached by one of the mascots, Fav.

Fav was a defective mascot. He cared more about interesting things rather than proper Magical Girls.

Together, Cranberry and Fav rose to the ranks until Cranberry became a certified administrator for selection tests.

That's when Cranberry began.

She had done many many trials before. All in an attempt to find the one all-powerful Magical Girl.

Cranberry longed to find the one opponent who would reignite her fighting spirit.

So far, almost every survivor would prove to not be what Cranberry was looking for. Not to mention, she couldn't allow them to explain the details of the tests, so she had their memories erased.

Then came the test last year.

The year Cranberry was killed.

The test where Snow White came from.

The test that actually produced the ideal Magical Girl.

Snow White had the strength and abilities to become ruthless, but because her memories weren't altered, she remembered the loss of life.

She remembered how it felt to lose friends.

So she had judgement that no other survivor would have.

Like any terrorist or villain, there would be those who would think Cranberry was 'correct.'

Two Magical Girl administrators copied Cranberry's selection process.

In the course of one year, Snow White apprehended them both.

It earned Snow White the name of *Magical Girl Hunter*.

The girl in the room of monitors grinned.

Snow White was perfect.

But there needs to be more Magical Girls like her.

Magical Girls that understood the pain of loss and suffering, but also were ruthless enough to win.

A Magical Girl who won't hesitate to make the hard decisions, but still fights for justice.

These participants that she's selected in this game, they were all involved with Cranberry in some way or another.

In a way, you could say, they are her *children*.

But which one will make it out?

Whatever happens, the ones that survive... are truly ideal Magical Girls.

CHAPTER 10

PECHIKA IN CREATURE WORLD

☆ Pechika

The weather never changed. It was cloudy, but Pechika knew it wouldn't rain. There was always going to be sunlight here.

This was the third... fourth login...? She couldn't even remember.

Ironic, because she remembered everything else about herself.

She's back in the Wasteland Area.

Waiting for her other teammates to arrive.

She squatted.

She stretched.

She squatted.

She stretched.

A workout is nice before doing anything too dangerous.

Her Magical Phone rang. It was a message from Pfle.

'Pechika, this is Pfle. I'd like to meet up. I don't know where you usually start. Could you update me with your location?'

Pechika also wanted to meet up. Not just with Pfle, but the rest of her group.

Clantail, Leonetta. She hadn't had a chance to talk a lot about when Miyokata died. So many things happened at once last time.

The argument that Leonetta had with Miyokata.

She also was curious about the others' memories, and what they remembered as well. Pechika wouldn't barge in of course, but if she was right, they might be the same as her.

She sent a reply to Pfle. In a few minutes, her Map application updated.

Clantail was approaching her. Soon, she heard hooves.

Clantail.

Pechika saw her approaching, and the both of them smiled at each other.

But then, Clantail's smile turned into an expression of alarm.

She brandished her weapon, and Pechika noticed that her eyes were staring behind Pechika.

"Pechika! Look out!"

Pechika turned around. Too late, she was slammed down to the ground, an arm holding her down.

She could see her assailant.

Floral decorations on her dress, the aroma of flowers and woodland. Elf ears.

Melville.

She felt Melville's harpoon's cold metal surface lightly touch the nape of her neck.

"Back." Said Melville. Not to Pechika, but to Clantail.

Clantail didn't move. She was furious, her spear at the ready.

"Melville? Let go of her!"

Melville's eyes were focused on Clantail, with pupils as fearsome as Pechika ever saw them.

"I sed... Back."

Clantail took short steps forward.

"Back! Or shi dies!"

There was some strange accent to Melville's voice, but Pechika felt like she could understand it somewhat.

The harpoon was pressed harder on her neck. Not enough to cut yet.

"What do you want, Melville?" asked Clantail.

No answer.

"Why are you doing this?" she asked.

"Bekaus I remember *everything*. Cranberry... wus my mentor. Du you know wat it fiils like to lose a mentor?"

Clantail's grip on her spear tightened.

Melville didn't back down.

"Very well, Clantail. Since yu won't back doun."

Then, a sharp pain. Melville's heel stepped hard on Pechika's right index finger.

"AAAAAAUGH!"

Pechika screamed in pain. She could feel her fingerbones being crushed with Melville's heel.

Clantail gasped. She still stood still.

Melville stepped again, this time on Pechika's middle finger.

"STO-AAAAUGHHH!"

Clantail stepped back.

Tears formed in Pechika's eyes.

“What the hell do you think you’re *doing*!?”

A voice from behind Melville. A familiar voice to Pechika.

Leonetta.

“No kwestyons. Thet was the deal,” said Melville, eyes still facing Clantail.

“We also agreed that it won’t be *her*,” said Leonetta.

Clantail’s expression was that of someone that had been betrayed.

“Leonetta... you...”

Leonetta walked in front of Pechika and Melville.

Pechika could see Leonetta’s right arm dangling weakly. It looked like Miyokata’s dragon broke it.

“Why?” asked Clantail.

Leonetta looked away.

“10 Million.”

“So it’s money? You killed people for money?”

“I didn’t kill anyone.”

“She *bought* your loyalty? Is that how it is?”

“You don’t know... my situation”

“It doesn’t matter. It’s not worth betrayal.”

“Clantail, I-”

“How long?”

Leonetta fell silent.

“Did you kill Masked Wonder? What about Cherna? Was @NyanNyan your kill too? Maybe you even planned to kill Miyokata”

“Fuck you! I didn’t- I wasn’t- No one was supposed to die. I... wouldn’t...”

“Look around you, Leonetta...”

Leonetta looked back at Pechika, on the ground, pinned by Melville, harpoon ready to slice her neck.

Leonetta smiled at Pechika.

“I’m sorry... for everything...”

Then she extended her claws. Pechika closed her eyes as Leonetta sliced down and...

Clang

...knocked the harpoon away from Melville

“Nda!?”

Melville's reaction was fast, and she attempted to strike down Pechika, but Leonetta blocks the shot once more.

"You're not laying a finger on Pechika." said Leonetta in a low, threatening tone, with a voice full of fury.

☆ Nokko-Chan

Nokko-Chan was running.

Lazuline was with her as well.

Pfle, on Shadow Gale's back, was with them too.

They spawned in the Demon's Castle, but had to go back to the Wasteland Area to meet up with Pechika and her team.

While piggybacking Shadow Gale, Pfle began speaking.

"It was obvious from the start, but I couldn't see it because I couldn't remember. Melville is our killer."

"Wh-What? Wait, Melly??? That can't be right!"

"She's the only one that makes sense. Look at her outfit. The way she dresses, her personality, it's exactly like Cranberry."

Nokko-Chan gulped at the thought. Melville's the killer?

"Of course, looks aren't concrete evidence, so I had to confirm it. She had to have the ability to hide the Miracle Coin when we inspected the phones, and she had to have found a way to hide Cherna's phone display too."

"I thought we agreed it was the Master!" said Lazuline.

"That is a possibility, but Melville's powers are capable of these things."

"What powers? Camouflage? She can blend in to the environment, right?"

"No. Not exactly. She can change the color of objects. Including herself. That means she could alter the display of the screen by changing pixel colors, too."

Lazuline's face was distorted with confusion.

"B-But why? Why kill Cherny!? They were good friends and were in the same group."

"Perhaps she did it subconsciously. Cranberry was her mentor. Perhaps she had the desire to defeat the strongest, like Cranberry did."

Lazuline breathed out a heavy sigh, trying to understand the situation.

They were still running across. They were almost there.

"You keep saying Cranberry this, Cranberry that. You never explained to me, *who* is Cranberry?"

Shadow Gale stopped.

Nokko-Chan as well.

Lazuline wasn't expecting a stop.

Pfle's eyebrows were raised. She was confused.

Shadow Gale's face was stiff.

Lazuline was confused as well, for a different reason.

"Huh? What? Why are you all looking at me like that?"

Pfle spoke,

"Lazuline. You had your memories restored right?"

"Uh... sure? Not much to restore really, I don't think I forgot anything."

"Do you know who the Forest Musician Cranberry is?"

"No, that's why I'm *asking* you! Who is this girl and what's up with Mellsy?"

Nokko-Chan looked at Shadow Gale and Pfle. The two girls had no idea what to say or explain.

Lazuline put her hands on her waist.

"Nokko-Chan, do you know Cranberry?"

Nokko-Chan gasped slightly.

"Yes. Yes, I do."

How could she forget someone like Cranberry?

Forcing Magical Girls to kill each other in some sick survival game. That was an unforgettable experience, if the memory wipe wasn't a thing.

"Okay, since *I'm* apparently the only one who has no clue, you'll have to tell me about this Cranberry later. Right now, we should hurry up"

☆ Pechika

Pain.

Numbness.

Pechika looked at her right hand.

Fingers crushed. The bones were broken. Blood leaking out.

Pechika couldn't move. The fear was back again. That fear was back again.

She heard clashing noises, clawing noises, breaking wood.

She couldn't move.

She was afraid.

Leonetta was pushed towards the ground. Most of her wooden skin was cracked or broken.

She was finding it hard to breathe.

Melville picked her up by the neck.

Pechika could hear Leonetta struggle.

Pechika couldn't move.

Snap!

Thump

Leonetta fell down again. Her eyes hollow. No expression.

She was gone.

Leonetta was dead. She died and Pechika couldn't do anything about it.

Pechika was too scared to do anything.

Leonetta apparently had worked with Melville before, but...

...Leonetta had fought to save Pechika's life.

She had complimented her food.

She had been nice to Pechika.

Yes, she argued with Miyokata but...

...Leonetta's face. The hollow looking face that Pechika had been seeing since the Library.

That wasn't the face of just sadness.

That was the face of guilt.

Leonetta had done horrible things in the past, and she felt guilty.

She wanted to make it up. To redeem herself.

So she gave her life to save Pechika.

And Pechika couldn't save her.

She could hear screaming. Yelling. Anger.

Clantail was fighting Melville.

Melville had tried to retreat, but Clantail gave chase.

Clantail crashed into Melville, and the two fought.

Spear vs. Bow.

Clantail was the strongest in Pechika's team. Leonetta and Miyokata were strong too, but Clantail...

...She defeated the Great Dragon, she was entrusted with the Dragon Killing knife, she was the one with the most resourcefulness.

Clantail, who always kept a calm demeanor, an aura of sophistication. This Clantail was now angry.

Angry and sad.

Clantail will win.

She *has* to win.

But why is Melville moving so fast? It's inhumanly impossible, even for a Magical Girl.

Then Pechika remembered Cranberry's movements. The way she fought. It was similar.

Clantail might lose.

Clantail might die.

She can't die.

Pechika saw Leonetta's corpse, broken and battered. She couldn't save Leonetta, but this time... Clantail won't die.

Pechika moved.

Her right hand was bursting with pain.

She tried to stand up, but couldn't support herself well enough. So she jumped, slid, and grabbed onto Melville's leg with her left hand. Gripping it tightly with the strength of a Magical Girl.

This caused Melville to stumble, and Clantail whacked her with the butt of her spear.

Her other leg kicked Clantail away.

Then Pechika felt a sharp pain in her left hand.

“GAAAAUGH!”

She screamed again. Then she saw what it was.

Pierced with a harpoon.

Her skin was ripped apart. Blood splurting. Her bones in her left hand were visible.

Then Melville violently removed the harpoon and kicked Pechika across the field.

Pechika stumbled and rolled across the ground. Both hands injured. She couldn't move.

The pain was unbearable.

“Agh!”

She felt a foot press down the back of her neck.

“Don't muve!”

Melville was restraining her.

Her neck was in pain. Melville's foot was pressing down on it. If she applied just a little more force, Pechika's neck would snap.

Melville aimed her bow at Clantail.



Clantail didn't move. Probably afraid that Pechika would die if she did.

Melville shot a harpoon at Clantail, and Clantail immediately materialized her Shield +10. The harpoon clashed with shield.

Another.

Another.

Melville was relentless.

The harpoon couldn't break through, but the vibrations and the impact of the harpoon began to weaken clantail's grip on the shield.

Melville had such strength.

"Gk...W-Wait!"

Pechika struggled to let out a voice.

Melville loosened her foot on Pechika's neck, but kept her pinned. Her eyes were still staring at Clantail, warning her not to move.

Pechika coughed out some air to breathe.

"C-Cranberry... Always fought fair. So fight Clantail fair and square. You're not like Cranberry at all."

Melville's eyes were filled with surprise. She glanced at Pechika, then she began laughing.

Her laugh, that smile, that was Cranberry's smile.

"I respect my muster, but I am not her. She died becauz she wanted a feir fight. I won't meik the seim mistake."

It didn't work. It didn't work.

Melville and Cranberry were the same, but yet they were different.

Pechika couldn't move.

Pechika wanted to move.

The forest.

They had fought her, but they lost.

She was fast, skilled, strong. Both of them tried to fight her at the same time, but there was no hope.

Pechika and her friend... who was her name?

They had been defeated and are now on the run.

But they lost their way in the forest.

Where are they now?

Everything was a blur.

"Pechika, run!"

Her friend shouted towards Pechika as Cranberry rushed her, and slammed her against a tree trunk.

Pechika was shocked. For the first time ever, she was scared.

She was scared.

Cranberry slammed her friend, then kicked her halfway across the woods. Her friend's body crashed into a rock, bloody and bruised.

She stood up. Why did she stand up? Just run.

Her friend tried to hit Cranberry, but Cranberry was too fast.

A choke, then a takedown, followed by beatings.

Cranberry punched and puched. She beat her down. She didn't stop.

She didn't stop until her friend was dead.

Pechika saw it all.

Pechika couldn't move.

Pechika couldn't save her friend. She just saw the battle happen, and she couldn't move.

Cranberry glanced over at Pechika.

From Cranberry's Magical Phone, a mascot character appeared. Fav.

"Well, good news, Pon! Looks like *you* survived the tests!"

"I'm not going to fight you. You're not as strong as your friend. It wouldn't be worth it," said Cranberry.

"You got lucky, Pon! Enjoy your new life! Don't worry, you won't remember any of this, so you'll be all good afterwards!"

Cranberry had spared her, Pechika was relieved.

But at the same time, Pechika was sad.

Tears flowed in her eyes.

After Cranberry left, she went over to the body of her friend.

Her friend's face was swollen, bloody, and red.

Pechika hugged her. She cried.

This was her fault.

She couldn't move.

She didn't move.

Why?

Why didn't she move?

She should have saved her.

She should've acted.

But she didn't move.

So her best friend died.

She couldn't even remember her name...

The scene replayed itself in Pechika's head.

Clantail was going to tire herself out, and then she'll die. Melville's strong, she's fast, and she'll beat Clantail like this.

She'll kill her.

Pechika couldn't move.

But this time...

...This time she *wanted* to move.

She was scared, but she wanted to move.

Her hands, both of them were broken, bloody...

It doesn't matter

She will die if she fights

And Clantail will die if I don't

She was scared

Even so, I have to...

She couldn't fight back

That's a lie. I can help!

Her body had been broken

But my spirit is burning

She couldn't move

I'll push my body to its limits

Pechika was determined

This time, it won't end like before

Pechika's Magical Skill activated.

5 minutes of touching the ground. Her Magical Skill, 'To turn anything into delicious cuisine'.

Suddenly, 10 meters in diameter around them, the ground transformed into vegetable soup.

Melville was dragged in, so was Pechika.

Pechika grabbed hold of Melville's legs, using her forearms to grab it. She couldn't use her fingers, so she had to improvise.

She dragged down Melville deep under the soup. The two of them continued plunging down.

Until, suddenly, the soup seemed to have created a waterfall downwards.

Pechika had transformed the entire ground below her into soup, and apparently there was an end.

Pechika and Melville fell into what seemed to be a cavern, landing on a lake.

This was familiar.

The Underground Lake, in the Underground Area.

It was underneath the Wasteland Area this whole time.

Pechika didn't let go of Melville.

The two of them continued drowning further in the lake.

Melville's face was strained, grasping for air. Air bubbles flew out of her.

She kicked Pechika's face.

I won't let go

She kicked it again

I'll never let go

She kicked another time

You'll have to force me

Melville struggled and struggled.

Finally, she raised her harpoon, and brought it down with a thrust.

Pain.

Numbness.

Then, red liquid mixed with the clear water.

☆ Shadow Gale

Shadow Gale was running.

Her body was moving, but her mind was set somewhere else.

According to Pfle, Melville was the killer. Which means Melville must be the traitor.

Melville is the traitor. The evidence has to make sense.

Cranberry, the one Magical Girl that looks like an elf, with vines, flowers, and a green colored motif, was the one that organized the killings.

Thus, Melville, the one person who looks like Cranberry, would be the one to engineer the killings here.

Wait, that didn't make any sense.

But think about her powers. She would be the only one that could the crimes.

The power to change an object's color.

Camouflage. She could kill Masked Wonder unexpectedly, a hit from behind without knowing it.

Cherna. She could change the display of the monitor, tricking her and anyone that

participated in the checking.

But then again...

Pfle knew where Masked Wonder was as well. She was her teammate.

Furthermore, Pfle was the last to check Cherna's Magical Phone. Shadow Gale knew this to be a fact. So she could also be the one tampering with it.

Shadow Gale didn't want to believe it.

Pfle can't be the killer.

Pfle can't be the traitor.

Pfle wouldn't go that far...

...would she?

“Mamori!”

She snapped back to reality. Mamori was running, but her mind was somewhere else.

She was still running, with Pfle on her back.

“Mamori, are you listening to me?”

“Huh?”

“I said that you left Nokko-Chan and Lazuline behind. I can't see them anywhere.”

“What? Where did they go?”

“I don't know. You ran pretty fast.”

Shadow Gale couldn't help it. She was on autopilot. Her mind was occupied. She took a look at her surroundings to make sure she was in the right place.

The area looks to be correct. She's in the Wasteland Area. She's in the correct place.

Just around the corner should be Pechika. However, as Shadow Gale peeked around the corner, what she saw was... a strange sight.

At the center of the field was a sinkhole, some liquid on it, that smells like vegetable soup.

And a discarded human-sized doll.

Wait, no... that's not a doll.

That's Leonetta...

Shadow Gale rushed over to Leonetta, she kneeled down and examined her. Parts of her body were cracked, since she was made of wood.

Leonetta's eyes seem sad and distraught, but there is no life in her body.

For some reason, Shadow Gale couldn't help but shed some tears. She didn't know her very well. She didn't know anyone very well other than Pfle.

Maybe she should've gotten to know all of them more...

She slowly closed Leonetta's eyes.

“There was a fight here. Based on the surroundings, it was probably Pechika”

Pfle didn’t even want to notice Leonetta’s dead body. How could she?

Why hadn’t Shadow Gale noticed anything before she remembered? Sometimes Pfle can be selfish.

Sometimes she can be cold.

No, she was always cold, always selfish. Shadow Gale just cared for her a lot that she saw through her faults.

Maybe it was time to see from a different perspective...

“Mamori. Perhaps it’s time we stop pretending. We should separate. It will be easier for the both of us”

Separation again?

Fine. Shadow Gale could use some alone time.

☆ Melville

Melville despised Pechika.

Melville hated her.

How dare she.

“*You’re not like Cranberry*”

Melville laughed it off at that time, but those words hurt. Those words hurt a lot.

How dare she.

Nobody knew Cranberry, nobody cared about Cranberry. To others, she was just a monster that killed people.

But when your mentor, the person you care about, is killed, and people insult the very memory you live up to...

...How dare they.

Melville wanted to become like Cranberry. Melville looked up to Cranberry. Melville adored Cranberry.

Cranberry was a powerful Magical Girl.

No, that’s wrong.

Cranberry was *the most* powerful Magical Girl.

When Melville became a Magical Girl, she had designed herself to look like Cranberry.

She wanted to become like her.

When she was chosen as a member of her test, she killed all in her way.

She even wanted to challenge Cranberry herself. It was an honor.

But Melville’s powers were to change color. It was no match for Cranberry’s.

Cranberry's powers were to control sound. Cranberry could easily hear Melville's heartbeat or footsteps.

Melville was nothing to Cranberry. Melville was no match for Cranberry.

And yet, Cranberry saw potential in Melville.

Cranberry took Melville in, and Melville trained with her. She trained to become like Cranberry.

And then something happened.

At some point in time, Cranberry was killed.

It's impossible. How did someone defeat Cranberry? Who killed Cranberry?

Finding out who it was angered Melville. It angered her so much. Because it wasn't even a worthy opponent.

She had seen the reports of the killing games.

Cranberry was attacked by a group led by a Magical Girl known as Swim Swim.

Swim Swim was an interesting Magical Girl. Young, and apparently, she adored her mentor as well.

Swim Swim adored her mentor, and wanted to become like her mentor. Melville and Swim Swim had a lot in common.

So was it Swim Swim that finally bested Cranberry? That would've been fate. Melville *may* have been able to accept it.

No.

It was a random Magical Girl named Tama, who barely did anything. She didn't kill anyone. She didn't fight. She spent most of the test following Swim Swim's orders, and to top it off, she was cowardly.

Someone like that killed Cranberry?

It's an impossibility. It's impossible.

So Melville has to make it right. She has to continue Cranberry's legacy. Find the strongest Magical Girls, and kill them.

Cranberry's gift to Melville is that her memories were never erased in the first place.

When Melville was invited to this game world, she saw the faces of many familiar people.

Some of these girls were like her.

Some of these girls had accepted Cranberry's ways.

And yet, some other girls were merely survivors of her test.

Akane. The Samurai. That one was a bother, for some reason she remembered part of her test.

The memory wipe must not have been strong enough.

She had to be eliminated.

But then, Masked Wonder came along, and kicked Cherna Mouse across the valley, when she was gigantic as well.

That is powerful.

Powerful.

So she must die.

And so she was killed. There can only be one strongest Magical Girl.

Cherna would also need to be killed. After all, she was also the strongest. But Melville couldn't beat her in hand-to-hand combat, not with Cherna's abilities. So Melville had to play it smart.

Changing the display on Cherna's phone. A simple trick for Melville.

Then, Akane fought with @NyanNyan.

@NyanNyan killed Akane, which meant @NyanNyan was the strongest. Which means she was next.

But Genopsyo was an unfortunate victim.

Perhaps there is also a way to kill @NyanNyan... with a little help.

An offer. Money. Leonetta. Melville knew of Leonetta. She knew of Leonetta's real life problems.

And so Leonetta accepted the money, and manipulated Genopsyo's body.

After all, a dead body is the same as a puppet.

And @NyanNyan was killed.

The next victim wasn't strong, but necessary. Detick Bell wasn't on her list, but she was going to give everyone their memory back.

Melville thought she stopped her, but somehow she didn't.

Now everyone remembers Cranberry.

Next on her list was supposed to be Lapis Lazuline.

She was powerful and strong, and fought similar to Cranberry.

However, she had a slight detour. Better to kill two birds with one stone. Pechika was defenseless. Or so she thought.

How did she end up in this situation?

But now she had to redirect her tracks.

She had stabbed Pechika with a harpoon, and is now free. She became invisible, and slowly walked over to the surface of the Underground Lake.

Then, she heard a splash.

Clantail had jumped down. Her body was that of an eel.

She swam towards Pechika, and took Pechika to shore. Clantail took out her Magical Phone, and took out a Healing Potion.

Pechika's eyes opened.

They were both smiling.

Now's Melville's chance. She's invisible. She had her harpoon. No matter what happens, Clantail will die.

She carefully took aim. No one could hear her.

She had trained with Cranberry. All sound would be dead. Cranberry taught her how to be as silent as possible.

All it takes is one throw. No one could hear her.

A forceful impact. If Clantail dies, Pechika will die too.

Silently, she threw the harpoon towards Clantail.

☆ Pechika

Pechika's eyes awoken.

"Pechika... you're okay!"

Clantail hugged Pechika. She was crying, and probably for the first time, she was smiling happily.

Pechika hugged her back. She had regained some of her strength.

Her stomach was stained red, but there was no pain or blood.

Then, Pechika... heard something.

She had a familiar feeling, a familiar smell, but she didn't know what it was. The wind just seemed... off.

She smelled metal, coming in fast.

Whoosh

There was no time to react. There was only instinct.

Pechika moved.

She turned Clantail around, switching places with her.

And then...

Pain,

Numbness,

Fear.

Pechika had been stabbed.

But for the first time, Pechika did something she thought she couldn't do.

She had moved, and saved a friend.

She was satisfied, and, while hugging Clantail and embracing her, she closed her eyes and smiled.

Leonetta, Miyokata, her little brother, Ninomiya-Kun, the friend she couldn't save, and... most importantly, Clantail.

Clantail, she should live a happy life.

It was fun while it lasted.

Pechika was satisfied and glad to make all of these friends.

It was fun while it lasted.

Pechika was happy.

☆ Melville

Again, Pechika had caused problems. Melville had missed her target.

But how would Pechika even know where Melville is?

She couldn't have heard it. Melville had trained to dampen her sound with the one and only Cranberry, whose power was to manipulate sound in the first place.

So what did Pechika do to find out about the harpoon.

...Of course.

Melville was foolish.

Pechika was a cook.

Her sense of smell was heightened. Because as a human, she must've already had a better sense of smell than most people.

Foolish.

Unprepared.

Clantail should have died now.

But instead, she hit Pechika instead. Nevertheless, it's not like Clantail would be able to figure out Melville's position.

Clantail was holding Pechika in her arms. She looked like she was crying.

Because of Pechika's magic, there was a large hole in the ceiling of the caves. Melville wished she was fighting in the Wasteland Area. Plenty more open space. But she can't exactly fly, and everyone is here.

It'll have to do.

One target. One kill.

Melville began to raise her harpoon again.

"Who did this?"

Melville heard a voice. Clantail was talking to someone.

Lapis Lazuline.

Lapis Lazuline?

“...Melville”

“...So Melly *is* the traitor. She killed Bellsie too?”

Lazuline’s face was full of anger. There was no sign of the innocent blue Magical Girl that Melville saw before.

Lazuline’s face turned away from Clantail and... turned towards Melville?

Wait, what?

She can’t possibly see her can she?

Melville had killed all her sound. She had trained with Cranberry, the manipulator of sound itself.

Then Lazuline disappeared, and in a spark of blue flash, she appeared only a few centimeters away in front of Melville.

“Melville. I asked you a question. Did you kill all those people?”

Melville was shocked. She retreated a few steps back. In a panic, she threw her harpoon straight to Lazuline.

Lazuline calmly caught it in mid-air. She then grabbed it with both arms and broke it.

“No point fighting. You can’t beat me, Melly.”

What is this?

Lazuline sprinted towards Melville, and rapidly, she began unleashing a series of punches and kicks.

Melville tried to defend herself.

A punch to the stomach, a punch to the face, an elbow to the chest, a knee to the ribs.

Why?

How?

Melville grabbed another harpoon, and managed to slash Lazuline’s right leg, but Lazuline responded by stepping on Melville’s foot, and then unleashing a kick to her shin.

Not even a sound of pain.

2 seconds have passed.

Melville threw a punch, but Lazuline disappeared into thin air.

Where did she-

Crack

Melville’s back was kicked. Bones were breaking.

Everytime Melville made a counterattack, Lazuline disappeared and reappeared nearby, and immediately delivered a pummeling beatdown to Melville.

This strength feels like fighting Cranberry.

A strike to the ribs.

A blow to the kidney.

Blood was coughing out.

A punch to the neck.

Lazuline had hit all her punches.

3 seconds have passed.

Melville fell to the ground. She couldn't handle the beating. If she wanted to beat Lazuline, she had to focus.

Lazuline kicked her across the area.

Then she teleported.

She lunged at Melville.

Now was her chance.

Quickly, Melville twirled around, harpoon at the ready, and...

...As Lazuline's body was brought towards Melville, the harpoon pierced Lazuline's chest.

Lazuline's face was still angry, but she lost her power.

Melville released the harpoon from her body.

Lazuline collapsed.

4 seconds have passed

"Melvilleeeeeeee!!!"

Clantail's voice.

Her lower body had turned into a gigantic lizard with red scales, and wings.

Wait, this isn't just any animal.

This is a *Great Dragon*.

Melville aimed her harpoon at Clantail's head as Clantail began to swoop down.

But then, Melville felt something grab her ankle.

She looked down.

It was Lazuline, breathing her last few breaths, angrily holding Melville down.

Melville lost her balance, and then...

Slash

Her body was torn in half.

It was over for her.

She had lost.

Blood splattered all over the ground.

Melville was dead...

...

...

...But the game was not over.

☆ Shadow Gale

Shadow Gale's back felt light. Pfle was no longer on her.

Where did Lazuline go? Where did Nokko-Chan go?

Shadow Gale opened up her Map app. Nokko-Chan's icon was in a building nearby.

Perhaps they could meet up.

Shadow Gale entered the building. It was empty.

Icons in the Map only show Magical Phones, not actual Magical Girl locations, so it might be a trap.

Then, Shadow Gale noticed a familiar smell.

A burning smell.

She followed the smell, wrench in her hand.

That's when she saw a crisp black corpse. Unidentifiable by her facial features. She was burnt. Very burnt.

On her hand, however, was Nokko-Chan's Magical Phone.

Shadow Gale instinctively closed her eyes at the sight of the body.

But...

Where's Nokko-Chan?

What's going on?

MASTER'S SIDE

PART 10

The automatic door opened to reveal a white Magical Girl standing on the other side.

“Come in, come in, Snow White!”

A Magical Phone activated, and Fal appeared.

“Snow White!”

“Shut up!”

Snap

The Magical Phone’s power turned off.

“Have a seat, Snow White.”

The Magical Girl known as Snow White took a seat at the table.

Snap

Coffee appeared on both ends.

Snow White looked straight at the girl with the glasses.

“Your name is Keek.”

“So you’ve done your homework, well done! I’m flattered.”

“You took girls who were involved with Cranberry’s tests”

“Yes, I did, Snow White. Now you understand why they must be properly trained to be ideal Magical Girls. Their tests were tainted.”

“And you call *this* game untainted? There’s death involved.”

“There’s always death in the real world. It’s a Magical Girl’s job to prevent it from happening in the first place. You could say I designed the perfect test.”

“No, you just copied Cranberry’s and put on a new paint job.”

“Why don’t we stop talking in circles and get to the point? Why are you here? Have you come to negotiate? The game’s almost over. Soon, either the Demon Lord or the players will win.”

Snow White stood up.

“I didn’t come to offer peace terms.”

“So different from before, Snow White... Did you know, that in order to get these girls in the game, I had to collect data about them. Their personal lives, their memories? To make another analogy, their copy in the game is a perfect copy of them in real life! Then their memories transfer to each other!”

“What’s your point?”

“My point is, Snow White... I’m not a bad person. I want to make the ideal Magical Girl. Someone like you. In fact, I want to see everyone be happy and alive!”

Keek smiled.

“Death is such an overrated thing. It’s sad to see your loved ones go away, right?”

Snow White’s face was still hardened. She had no idea what Keek’s trying to do.

“Snow...”

A familiar voice.

It can’t be.

He’s dead.

Snow White turned around.

The figure of a girl, silver hair, horns, a sword in sheath, yellow eyes, dragon tail.

La Pucelle.

“Sou-Chan?”

“Snow White”

Another voice. Higher, younger. Next to La Pucelle.

A girl in black hair, a black dress, pale skin, bags under her eyes.

Hardgore Alice.

Keek smiled from behind her.

“I can give them back to you. It’s possible in my world. They’ll be no different from when they were in the real world. It’s the same thing. La Pucelle, Hardgore Alice. They shouldn’t have to die.”

Snow White looked over at Keek.

Her mind was reeling from seeing those two. Those two again.

It brought back too many painful memories.

Keek continued,

“So, what will it be, Snow White?”

CHAPTER 11

THE ONES WE LEAVE BEHIND

☆ Shadow Gale

Shadow Gale had redesigned her stun gun. A more powerful version of it. She had no idea how stun guns worked, but it's not like it matters for someone with her powers.

A text from Pfle.

'Gather at the Demon's Castle. Hurry.'

Before she left the area, she looked again at the corpse.

Burnt. Just like before in the Underground Area.

Holding Nokko-Chan's Magical Phone.

Is Nokko-Chan dead?

But there are no dragons in the Wasteland Area, unless... someone used the modified flamethrower that Shadow Gale had during the Demon's Castle area.

Shadow Gale had an uncomfortable thought. She had to confirm it.

When she got out, she saw Clantail climbing from the hole formed at the ground.

Her body was a gecko, and in both her shoulders, she was carrying Pechika and Lazuline.

Shadow Gale waited for her to pass, and dived into the hole.

Soon, she arrived at the Demon's Castle, where Pfle, with her magic carpet, was waiting for her.

"Mamori, it looks like Melville has died, according to our party status. Lazuline as well."

"I saw Clantail carry Lazuline and Pechika upwards."

"But there is a problem. The game isn't over."

"Which means the Demon Lord is still alive."

Pfle closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"My lady, I need to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"Who has the flamethrower that I modified?"

"I do, Mamori."

...

"Is something wrong?"

"Nothing."

...

Pfle nodded, and turned on her Magical Phone. Fal was summoned.

“Fal, I need to know something about the game.”

“I’ll... try, Pon. My lips are semi-sealed.”

“This game’s participants... are they recreating Cranberry’s tests?”

“No, Pon. The game master has taken former participants of Cranberry’s tests and put them in this game, Pon.”

“But Lapis Lazuline doesn’t know Cranberry”

“Ha? But her memory should be restored, Pon!”

“She told us she doesn’t know her.”

“...”

Fal lost all expression, and was genuinely confused.

Then he distorted a bit, and went back to normal.

“...A message from the Master, Pon. It appears she made a mistake. Lapis Lazuline was not supposed to be here. Her predecessor was, Pon.”

“Her predecessor?”

“According to the Master, she was trained by Cranberry as well, Pon.”

So the Master made a mistake.

She *can* make mistakes. Which means she doesn’t know everything, which means there might be a way out.

“I’m sorry, Pon. But the Master has declared an emergency event meeting at the Town Square. There are only a few people left, and she’s hoping for a victory soon, Pon. Prepare yourself...”

Fal disappeared.

Pfle looked at Shadow Gale.

“Mamori, did you find Nokko-Chan?”

“I found a phone with a charred body holding it.”

Pfle looked at Shadow Gale for a bit, then she closed her eyes and shook her head.

“Then she’s gone.”

“Who burned her, my lady?”

“I do not know, Mamori”

...

Pfle sighed,

“Then we only have Pechika and Clantail as our suspects.”

“No, Pechika’s gone. Clantail carried her along with Lazuline.”

“That narrows it down a lot, Mamori.”

...

...

...

“Yes it does, my lady.”

The world became white, and suddenly they were transported into the Wasteland Town.

Standing in the square were 3 people.

Clantail.

Shadow Gale.

Pfle.

Clantail approached them. Her body was a horse.

“Why isn’t the game over?” she asked.

“Because the traitor is still alive,” said Pfle.

“I killed Melville”

“Melville isn’t the traitor”

“But she killed everyone, she tried to kill me... she killed Pechika and Lazuline.”

“The traitor isn’t necessarily the killer,” answered Pfle calmly. Sitting in her magical flying carpet.

“Where’s Nokko-Chan?” asked Clantail.

“Burnt. I found her dead,” said Shadow Gale.

“You found her? Alone?” asked Clantail.

“I didn’t kill her.”

Pfle looked straight at Clantail.

“There are no more suspects. Process of elimination makes you the only culprit, Clantail.”

“Me? I’m not the Demon Lord! Why not her!?” asked Clantail, pointing at Shadow Gale.

Pfle shook her head, “Shadow Gale has been with me from the beginning and protected me. She cannot be the Demon Lord. I’m an easy target.”

Clantail blinked twice. Then she laughed.

“I can’t believe this... you two really think *I’m* the traitor? What the hell kind of logic is that? Where’s the proof!?”

“We don’t have any, like I said, process of elimination.”

Clantail stomped her hooves on the ground.

She took out her spear.

“So you two are going to kill me, huh? What about Nokko-Chan’s body? Burnt, right? Who has that flamethrower?”

...

...

...

“I was not in the wasteland area,” answered Pfle.

Clantail’s face was full of anger.

“I am *not* dying today. Not after what I’ve been through.”

“Mamori, take left!”

Instantly, Pfle flew towards the right. Shadow Gale took out her wrench and ran left.

Pincer attack.

Clantail’s lower body transformed into a tiger. She took out her Great Dragon shield.

Shadow Gale swung her wrench, but Clantail deflected it with her shield. The power of that shield was strong, and it threw Shadow Gale’s wrench away. Off-balance.

“Mamori! Stun Gun!”

Shadow Gale threw the stun gun at Pfle. Pfle thrusted for Clantail, but the shield again blocked it.

Shadow Gale saw her chance. She tackled Clantail and took hold of her spear.

Moving in, Shadow Gale attempted to thrust the spear, but Clantail’s body transformed into a snake, and she dodges it easily.

She wrapped herself around Shadow Gale, tightening her grip.

Pfle took out her flamethrower, and sprayed towards Clantail.

Clantail released her grip and took cover behind the shield. The shield was good, but some flames still got through and slightly burnt Clantail’s skin.

Clantail then transformed into a giraffe body, becoming tall in the process.

Shadow Gale thought fast.

“My lady! I need the stun gun!”

Pfle nodded and passed it back to her. Shadow Gale combined it with another random object she got before.

The rope.

Rope + Stun Gun, remodeled, improved, an electric net.

The strength of the stun gun. It’ll activate as soon as it wraps itself around its victim. The power of the stun gun, upgraded by Shadow Gale, was that it can knock out a Magical Girl in one shock.

Shadow Gale threw the net towards Clantail, as Pfle flew around her, distracting Clantail with her flamethrower.

The net wrapped itself around Clantail, and electricity began flowing from it.

“Nggh!”

Clantail grunted in pain as she transformed into a horse once again, falling down to her knees.

But she was still conscious.

What?

How?

Then Shadow Gale saw her necklace.

Earth Amulet. Back in the Underground Area. It’s ability is to reduce the power of electric-based attacks in half.

Clantail endured the pain, unwrapped the net, and threw it towards Shadow Gale.

Shadow Gale was still surprised. This was unexpected. Had to dodge.

She had to dodge.

Too late.

The net wrapped itself around Shadow Gale.

Then, a surge of electricity. Burning pain in the skin. Bones burning. Muscles are contracting.

Every single pain sensor in Shadow Gale’s body was being activated at once. She had no control of her body.

“AAAAAAAUGH!!! GGYAAAAAHHA!?!?”

3 seconds, and the pain stopped, and the world fell into darkness.

For a split second, Shadow Gale could hear Pfle shout her name.

“Mamori!!!”

Cranberry’s test was brutal.

They had to survive. They had to survive at all costs. Only one could survive. At least, that’s what Shadow Gale thought.

She’ll never forget that moment when Pfle walked over to her.

Her dress was bloody. Her face was bloody as well. But Pfle was smiling.

“Mamori... you’re safe.”

With tears, Pfle ran over to her and hugged her.

Shadow Gale was taken by surprise. Not by the hug, but by all this blood on Pfle.

“My lady... what happened? Were you attacked?”

“It’s okay... Everything’s going to be okay... We’ll be okay, Mamori”

“My lady, what did you do? I thought only one could go out?”

“No, it’s fine. It’s fine. I found a way.”

“What are you talking about?”

Pfle didn’t answer.

Shadow Gale raised her eyebrows.

“What did you do?”

“It doesn’t matter anymore...”

And then she forgot everything. Her mind was blank, but Shadow Gale had known what happened in her mind.

Pfle, the master of manipulation, had manipulated 98 girls into killing each other.

Pfle made a deal with Cranberry.

She had made a deal with the devil to save Shadow Gale’s life, at the cost of Pfle’s own innocence.

Pfle would kill to protect Shadow Gale.

She would kill to do make sure Shadow Gale stays alive

Shadow Gale opened her eyes. She was on the ground. Her arms and body were hot, and there were burn marks all over her arms.

Her head was woozy, but she could still see the battle before her.

Clantail’s lower body had turned into an alligator.

She had rode on top of Pfle’s flying carpet and crashed it. Then, with a swoop of her tail, sent Pfle tumbling away on the streets.

Clantail transformed back into a horse, took out her spear, and charged towards Pfle.

Clantail’s face was that of someone that was betrayed.

“What did you do?”

“It doesn’t matter”

Not someone that was found out as a traitor.

“Process of elimination points to you”

“What!?”

Clantail charged at Pfle, spear ready, but...

...Pfle stood up.

She had never stood up in the game before. Shadow Gale knows she can walk, but no one else did.

Clantail stopped, mostly out of shock.

“You can stand...?”

Pfle’s eyes were burning in anger.

“Yes, and for hurting Mamori, you won’t be able to stand.”

In a split second, Pfle leaped forward and delivered a swift kick to Clantail. Clantail retaliated with a spear thrust, but Pfle used the momentum of Clantail’s attack to dodge it.

She grabbed the spear and stole it out of Clantail. She smacked Clantail with the butt of the spear, and twirled it to point it towards Clantail.

Clantail is innocent.

Pfle thrusted the spear, Clantail blocked it with her shield.

Pfle planted the spear on the ground, launching herself upwards. She landed on Clantail’s horse body, grabbed her in a chokehold, and kicked the shield away.

Clantail is not the traitor.

Clantail transformed into a crocodile, and twirled away. Pfle let go of her grip.

Clantail tried to rush Pfle, turning her lower body into a leopard, but as she tried to punch Pfle, Pfle grabbed hold of her fist, and broke 3 of Clantail’s fingers.

Pfle summoned the flamethrower. Clantail noticed, bolted backwards, and barely escaped the inferno.

Kanoe... Stop...

Clantail raced for the shield, grabbed it, and stood her ground.

The flames were getting bigger as Pfle slowly walked towards Clantail, her face furious with rage.

Don’t kill her

This was just like before.

Pfle acted weak, but she wouldn’t hesitate to kill in order to protect someone.

A dark feeling formed in Shadow Gale’s mind.

I have to stop her.

Clantail is innocent.

I have to stop Kanoe.

She found the strength to stand up.

Clantail’s body had turned into a jellyfish, whose body was made of water, in order to reduce the burning of the flames.

Shadow Gale summoned her wrench.

I have to stop Kanoe.

Kanoe is the traitor.

Kanoe is the traitor all this time.

A straight line to Pfle.

Shadow Gale ran as fast as she can, wrench in her hand, and as soon as she reached Pfle...

...She swung the wrench hard at Pfle's head.

Wham!

Pfle was launched towards a building, bounced off, and rolled and tumbled down the street.

Shadow Gale's anger turned to elation.

I saved someone.

I stopped the traitor.

She approached Pfle, she had to see Pfle's face, her reaction, to see if Pfle really was the traitor.

Pfle's left hand was twitching. She was on her back, her body sprawled on the ground.

Then, Pfle stopped moving.

Pfle stopped moving.

Shadow Gale looked at her sprawled body, all bloody.

Pfle isn't moving.

Dead?

Shadow Gale's feelings turned hollow.

Even more, the game wasn't over.

The game didn't end.

Pfle was not the traitor.

“...NoI couldn't have... That”

Shadow Gale began mumbling. Trying to understand why she did what she did.

I killed Pfle.

Pfle isn't moving.

I'm a murderer.

Shadow Gale promised to protect Pfle.

She was innocent.

Shadow Gale promised to always be by her side.

What have I done?

She grew up with her

She was all I had

Shadow Gale and Pfle had been through so much

Why did I ever doubt her?

Mamori's name meant protection

I killed Kanoe...

Mamori was supposed to protect Kanoe.

Kanoe...

Kanoe...

Shadow Gale fell to her knees.

“Kanoe... I... didn’t mean to... Kanoe”

Tears began flowing down Shadow Gale’s face.

“Kanoe... wake up... please wake up... I’m sorry... I didn’t mean to... I’m sorry”

Then, Shadow Gale was grabbed by the neck.

Clantail.

She slammed Shadow Gale towards a wall, with a spear ready by her neck.

Shadow Gale dropped her wrench.

All the power on Shadow Gale was lost.

Clantail looked at Shadow Gale.

“You... Are you the traitor?”

Shadow Gale wanted to deny it, but she couldn’t.

Tears just kept flowing.

Why did I do it?



Clantail might be the traitor, who knows at this point?

Kanoe is gone, and Shadow Gale couldn't live her life knowing she was the one that killed her.

“Pechika and Lazuline saved my life. I’m not dying today. If you *are* the traitor. You’re going to die.”

Shadow Gale was afraid and sad.

But she let out a small voice as she cried.

“...Just do it... Kill me...”

Clantail was slightly taken aback. Her spear was still pointed at Shadow Gale’s throat.

But then.

“...Stop.”

Pfle’s voice.

“...I’ve heard enough. None of you are... ngh... the traitor.”

Shadow Gale gasped and smiled.

Clantail released her grip on Shadow Gale.

Shadow Gale immediately ran over to Pfle, and she hugged her. Shadow Gale hugged Pfle and never wanted to let go. She hugged her tightly.

Clantail looked around her and regained her thoughts. She put her spear away.

Pfle hugged Shadow Gale back. Pfle’s nose was bleeding, her face was as well.

Shadow Gale didn’t stop crying, but she was smiling, and she dumped her face on Pfle’s shoulder.

“Kanoe... I’m so sorry! I’m sorry... I thought I lost you... *sniff*... I don’t know what got over me, I...”

Shadow Gale cried on Pfle’s shoulder. Pfle patted her back, and Pfle smiled.

“Kanoe, I don’t want you to go...”

“It’s okay, Mamori. I’m sorry for doing that to you... I had to make sure you weren’t both the traitor.”

Clantail was confused.

“Wha... What? Then *who*? ”

Pfle looked towards Clantail.

“She was smart. She hid it all from us. Since the very beginning. Mamori was acting strange. Doubting me more than usual, and I was even suspecting her of being the traitor.”

Pfle continued talking while calming down Shadow Gale.

“But when Mamori hit me across the head, I was knocked back into reality, per se... I realized that a lot of things seemed off and unnatural. Everyone began suspecting each other since our first meeting in the town square.”

Clantail widened her eyes.

“Wait, what are you saying?”

“I’m saying the traitor is none of us. She’s still alive. Someone who’s been manipulating our emotions this whole time.”

Clantail realized what Pfle's talking about.

"...But she's not here."

"Is she? I suggest we have a look."

Shadow Gale recovered from her bout of crying. Her face is red.

Pfle wiped some tears off of Shadow Gale's face, and she smiled. Shadow Gale never felt so relieved in her life.

The three Magical Girls looked around the square.

Then, Shadow Gale noticed something in the fountain. Cracks. Small cracks.

Curious, Shadow Gale punched through the cracks. A hole underneath the fountain, and hiding underneath.

A maid Magical Girl.

☆ Nokko-Chan

This game.

This game is hell for Nokko-Chan.

I mean, how do you react to a game that tells you that you're a traitor and are supposed to kill everyone else to win?

Nokko-Chan wasn't someone who liked to murder people.

Why did the game pick her for that?

This game has been a hellish nightmare ride.

It looked like if Nokko-Chan died, then the other girls would be able to all return and survive.

For a second, just for a bit, Nokko-Chan considered suicide.

But then she would remember her mother. She couldn't do that to her.

So Nokko-Chan had to survive, or else her mother won't survive. Her survival was reliant on her mother.

She had to find a way to get everyone, but she also didn't want to kill anyone.

Conflicting goals. The best she could do... was indirectly kill them.

Sowing the seeds of discord, the emotional manipulator.

Pechika, normally a confident outgoing Magical Girl, was turned scared and frightened of her own abilities.

Detick Bell was made to suspect Lazuline as a traitor. Sowing the feelings of paranoia towards Detick Bell and Lazuline.

Melville had a feeling of hidden vengeance. All it took was lighting a spark, and Nokko-Chan fanned the flame.

Leonetta and Miyokata would often times get on each other's bad side, so she just had to increase their feelings of distrust towards each other.

When Cherna died, all feelings of paranoia were increased towards Pfle, the one with the most control.

But also, Shadow Gale had a sense of loyalty to Pfle. Nokko-Chan simply sowed the seeds of doubt in Shadow Gale's mind, and caused her to feel paranoid and distrustful towards Pfle.

As Nokko-Chan grew in power, she increased her effects.

No one suspected Nokko-Chan, because she always had calm feelings happen when they talk to her.

Pfle was smart, but she never suspected Nokko-Chan, because of the calm feeling she gave her.

Melville never targeted Nokko-Chan for the same reasons.

At the end, everyone's feelings had taken over them.

Melville was obsessed with vengeance.

Shadow Gale constantly tried to justify that Pfle was the traitor, no matter the evidence.

Pechika was convinced of her own fear, even though she conquered it.

And then, at the end, seeding the rage inside of Clantail, the 3 Magical Girls fought.

When Shadow Gale was hurt, Pfle was truly angry, and Nokko-Chan pushed her even more off the edge.

But also, Shadow Gale's paranoia and doubt had taken over her mind, so much so that she almost killed Pfle.

...But Nokko-Chan didn't want all this.

She wanted @NyanNyan to be happy.

She wanted her team to be happy.

Pechika was a nice girl, she wanted her to be happy too.

Shadow Gale and Pfle shouldn't have their relationship nearly torn to shreds.

Leonetta and Miyokata were loyal to each other, even if they fought.

She didn't want to kill.

But she had to kill.

Two conflicting goals.

And now she remembers why she was chosen.

In a way, it wasn't exactly her fault, but she was considered Cranberry's assistant, and therefore given the title of Demon Lord. Traitor.

It all started with Nokko-Chan's director.

The person giving Nokko-Chan money for jobs that Nokko-Chan would do.

Her director was a sympathizer of Cranberry. She would tell her the names of Magical Girls and ask Nokko-Chan to manipulate their emotions.

Make some angry, make some sad, make some happy.

She always got money for it.

Eventually, Nokko-Chan realized that this was to accelerate a killing game, and Nokko-Chan was uncomfortable with it.

She can't confess either, or she'll be taken away by the Land of Magic.

Guilt by association.

Then Nokko-Chan's mother would be gone, no money to support her health care.

So Nokko-Chan had no choice.

She had to save her mother.

She had dug out @NyanNyan's corpse, placed her Magical Phone on her hand, placed her somewhere far away, ran towards the town, hid inside the fountain.

Waited.

Waited.

When she sensed the presence of others in town, she began.

First, distrust.

Then, anger.

Then, hatred.

Finally, despair. Sadness. All negative emotions.

Suicidal emotions.

But that had failed. And now she was in this situation.

The three Magical Girls were staring down at Nokko-Chan.

A sense of victory was on them.

Shadow Gale, Clantail, Pfle, all smiled.

There was still a chance to save Nokko-Chan's mother.

Nokko-Chan grabbed the shovel, leaped outside, stood away, and gripped it tightly.

The other girls prepared for a fight, but then...

"If you're going to kill me, I won't resist. I deserve it, after everything I've done. But I want to make a deal with you."

Her feet were trembling.

Nokko-Chan was scared.

But she will save her mother, no matter what happens.

MASTER'S SIDE FINAL PART

“Game’s over, Snow White. Looks like they killed the Demon Lord. So, what do you say? I told you these girls would kill to win”

Snow White stood up.

She spoke,

“Alright, Keek. Let’s talk.”

“Ohoho, Snow White, finally willing to negotiate, hmm?”

“Tell me what I’m going to be negotiating with first.”

“We’ll repeat this selection process again, with *all* of Cranberry’s children. The killers, the survivors, we’ll mold them into ideal Magical Girls!”

“So why wasn’t I chosen?”

“Because you’re *different*, Snow White. You didn’t kill anybody. You defeated Cranberry.”

“I never fought Cranberry”

“Exactly... by not killing anyone *and* surviving, you’ve proven yourself to be the ideal Magical Girl. Even Ripple killed two people.”

“So what happens to the killers that survive your game.”

“Unforgivable. Killers shouldn’t be allowed to live. That’s their crime, taking a life, so that’s their punishment.”

Snow White nodded.

“So you believe that all of Cranberry’s children are guilty.”

“Of course! They have Cranberry’s mark on them. Their mental state has changed.”

“Tell me, Keek. What’s the name of your mentor?”

“A respectable Magical Girl, who always stood for justice!”

“And her name...?”

Keek raised her index finger. For 30 seconds, she stared at the table.

“Huh...? I can’t... remember?”

Why couldn’t Keek remember.

What was her name?

Keek loved her mentor. She adored her. A Magical Girl out to fight for justice. She taught Keek everything.

So why...

Snow White pulled out a file. On the file were the words ‘Keek’ on them.

“That’s your file. Land of Magic. Certified.”

“...What?”

“I couldn’t read your mind, so I assumed something was wrong. You think you turned off my powers, but you turned off the wrong one.”

“What do you mean?”

“You thought my powers were simply to listen to people’s minds *only* when they’re in distress? I’ve grown, Keek. I can pinpoint any distressful feelings you have *and* read those thoughts as well.”

Flame Flamey. Snow White is right.

But still, what’s this file.

Keek opened it and read it.

Snow White continued talking.

“Your mentor’s name was Pythie Frederica. She’s a sympathizer of Cranberry. She passed on her teachings to you. Why do you think your idea of the perfect test is one where they all kill each other? Your logic is flawed, Keek. Your world is fake.”

“I... no...”

No, it can’t be.

But Keek hated Cranberry.

But her mentor.

Snow White glared at Keek.

“You lied to yourself. You’re just like those children you speak of. You’re not god, Keek, *you’re* the Demon Lord of your own world.”

Keek fell off her chair.

Her glasses shattered.

The walls and floors distorted.

Snow White picked up Keek’s Magical Phone.

“You said so yourself. Children of Cranberry. Unforgivable. Right, Keek?”

Keek backed away from Snow White.

Keek was afraid.

Afraid of herself.

Of who she really is.

Snow White turned on the Magical Phone.

“Fal?”

“Snow White...?”

“I hope you don’t mind this, but since your former master is... occupied. I’m taking you with me.”

Fal’s eyes widened.

“Yes! Yes, Pon! Yes! I promise I’ll be a good mascot to you, Pon!”

Snow White smiled, nodded, and turned off the Magical Phone.

Then, she turned her back, eyes never changing, and walked out the door.

Keek’s world shattered.

Keek went into a fetal position.

She screamed.

The world became black as void. The doors and monitors disappeared.

Keek’s world was a lie.

She had become the monster she wanted to be rid of.

Keek screamed, and she would never stop.

EPILOGUE

Kanoe and Mamori were sitting in a coffee shop outside the hospital.

This was a nice hospital. They were waiting for someone.

A middle school girl, with pigtails and glasses, shorter than they were, entered the shop.

She looked around confused.

Kanoe stood up and approached her.

“Clantail?”

The pigtailed girl looked towards her and was surprised.

“I’m Pfle. That’s Shadow Gale. My real name is Kanoe, and her name is Mamori.”

The pigtailed girl smiled.

She looked at Mamori, and Mamori smiled back at her.

She then spoke,

“My name is Nene Ono. Call me Nene. Nice to finally meet you two in real life.”

Nene sat around the table with them.

“You’re younger than you look,” said Mamori with a chuckle.

Nene blushed at those words. “Well, yeah... surprised huh?”

“You know a lot about animals” asked Kanoe.

“Thanks. I want to be a zoologist when I grow up. Hopefully I can,” said Nene with a smile.

She took out some Tupperware from her bag.

“I brought food for you two. A little something I cooked. I started practicing a few days ago, so if it’s bad... sorry”

Mamori smiled at her, and took the food. She ate it, so did Kanoe.

“This is good, Nene. Really good.”

Nene blushed a bit.

“Thanks... it was her favorite. She’d cook it for our team whenever we took breaks.”

Mamori saw Nene looking a bit down.

Mamori grabbed Nene’s hand.

“It’s okay. You can let it out.”

Nene shed some tears, remembering Pechika.

Mamori understood that feeling. Losing the one person you cared about. Mamori had let

her feelings be clouded in the game.

Now, Mamori wanted to be better. Mamori wanted to change.

“Nokko-Chan’s hospital bills were paid,” said Kanoe.

“Her mother’s in good hands,” said Nene, sniffling.

“How are we going to tell her?” asked Mamori.

Kanoe closed her eyes.

“We have to.”

Mamori remembered the last few moments of that game.

Nokko-Chan had been manipulating their minds. She’d been found out.

The 3 Magical Girls were angry, distraught, full of despair.

Clantail was about to charge, Shadow Gale was going to kill Nokko-Chan for what she almost made her do to Pfle, Pfle was also ready to end it here.

But then, a warm feeling of calm washed over Shadow Gale.

This was Nokko-Chan’s doing, but...

...but it was calming.

It was nice, happy, a good feeling.

The three Magical Girls didn’t move.

Nokko-Chan stood trembling with her shovel.

“Hear me out, before you do anything, hear me out,” said Nokko-Chan.

She took a deep breath.

“I deserve... to die. But no one else did, none of the other girls, and... and my mother deserves to live as well...”

Mother?

“If I... If I do what I’ll do next, then you’ll all share the money reward. I’m just asking you to share it... with everyone’s family. Please. I caused all this, and I don’t want their family to suffer...”

Nokko-Chan never wanted to kill anyone.

She never directly killed anyone.

The traitor role was forced into her.

“It doesn’t excuse what I did... to all of you. But... But, at least I know, if you accept my deal, then their families will be at peace...”

The 3 Magical Girls looked at each other.

They looked sad. Not from Nokko-Chan’s manipulation, but genuinely sad.

Pfle nodded slowly.

Nokko-Chan chuckled. A small chuckle.

“...Thank you. I’m sorry... for breaking relationships, for tearing rifts... I’m sorry for everything.”

Nokko-Chan pointed the shovel at her throat.

“...But none of you will be killers today.”

Shadow Gale wanted to sprint towards Nokko-Chan, but the feeling of happiness and pleasure stopped her again.

“Goodbye, I wish we could’ve met under different circumstances,” said Nokko-Chan as she smiled.

Then she rammed the shovel into her neck.

The game world turned white.

The game...

...was over.

“Did you two hear about the game master?” asked Nene.

Mamori choked on her coffee.

Kanoe nodded.

“Land of Magic sent someone to deal with her,” said Kanoe

“What? Did it work?” asked Mamori

“Yes, we don’t know what happened, but the game master never showed up again.”

“How?”

“I’m not sure, Mamori. Perhaps one day we’ll know the details. For now, it’s time to visit them. I’ve got the flowers.”

The three nodded. They stood up, and left the coffee shop.

12 graves.

One for each Magical Girl.

The three girls stood in front of it. They couldn’t recover the real bodies, but this is their memory of them.

Flowers on every single one.

They had already passed the money into their families.

Now they mourn.

“...It’s lonely.”

“It is.”

“What do we do now?” asked Nene.

Mamori looked at Nene, then at Kanoe.

“We move on. We move on for them, we change for the better,” she said as she smiled.

Kanoe chuckled.

“Well said.”

Yes.

It’s time to change for the better. Become a better person.

Masked Wonder was a hero of justice, Mamori wished she talked to her more.

Pechika, Mamori never got to know her a lot.

So many things that Mamori wished she had done if she weren’t so stubborn before.

Now, both as Mamori and as Shadow Gale, it was time for a new beginning.

For everyone’s sake. For the ones they left behind...